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Erfurt School of Public Policy

Careers with UNEP

**A study on recruitment strategies and
qualification requirements at the United Nations
Environment Programme (UNEP)**



Professional Education for International Organizations

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Erfurt School of Public Policy
Nordhäuser Str. 63
99089 Erfurt

Phone: +49 361 / 737-1916
Fax: +49 361 / 737-1916
www.profio.de
info@profio.de

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Project Supervisor:
Prof. Dr. Dietmar Herz

Susan Lynn Dortants, M.E.S.
susan.dortants@uni-erfurt.de

Kristin Linke, M.A.
kristin.linke@uni-erfurt.de

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Executive Summary (English)

The following report gives an overview of the results that were obtained in the PROFIO study on recruitment strategies and qualification requirements at UNEP. To achieve the objectives of the PROFIO project, qualitative interviews were conducted with employees in the professional category. With regard to the educational background of the UNEP employees, this study has identified that the subjects studied most often were in a financial or management-related area, a technical area, environmental and natural sciences, or the humanities. These degree programs – and particularly the combination of a technical sector or environmental/natural science degree program with a degree in management or finance – were said to be a good preparation for a career at UNEP. Furthermore, this study has shown that the employees rated their university education as having provided them with the necessary analytical and critical thinking skills, as well as substantive knowledge. However, the interview partners indicated that their university education lacked practical training, which is important for developing other professional skills (e.g., intercultural skills, communication skills, and project management skills). To equip students with the skills and competences needed to perform the various tasks at UNEP, the employees recommended that universities should pay sufficient attention to skills development and ensure the practical as well as professional orientation in learning by including internships or other structured programs into their curricula. Active and problem-based teaching methods should be applied to develop basic skills and competences. Concerning the recruitment process and qualification requirements, this study has shown that the “perfect candidate” UNEP would look for is someone who has a master’s degree, expertise in an area relevant to the job in question, sufficient work experience abroad, and competencies necessary for a successful performance on the job.

Executive Summary (German)

Im vorliegenden Bericht werden die Ergebnisse der PROFIO-Studie über den Rekrutierungsprozess und die Qualifikationsanforderungen des Umweltprogramms der Vereinten Nationen (UNEP) dargestellt. Zur Erhebung des Datenmaterials wurden qualitative Interviews mit Mitarbeitern des höheren Dienstes durchgeführt. Die Ergebnisse der Studie zeigen, dass die Mitarbeiter ihre Hochschulabschlüsse überwiegend in einem technischen, naturwissenschaftlichen, wirtschaftswissenschaftlichen oder geisteswissenschaftlichen Bereich erworben haben. Insbesondere die Kombination von technischen oder naturwissenschaftlichen Studiengängen mit wirtschaftswissenschaftlichen Studiengängen erwies sich hier als gute Vorbereitung für eine Karriere innerhalb des UNEP. Weiterhin stellte sich in dieser Studie heraus, dass die Mitarbeiter durch ihre Universitätsausbildung analytische Fähigkeiten und Fachkenntnisse erworben haben, die sie für ihre aktuellen Tätigkeiten benötigen. Allerdings wurde hervorgehoben, dass es im Hochschulstudium an der praktischen Ausbildung mangelte, die für die Vermittlung von bestimmten Kompetenzen und Qualifikationen (z. B. interkulturelle Kompetenz, Kommunikationsfähigkeiten, Projektmanagementtechniken) von Bedeutung ist. Um Studenten die Fähigkeiten und Kompetenzen zu vermitteln, die sie benötigen, um die vielfältigen Aufgaben im UNEP ausführen zu können, empfahlen die Mitarbeiter, dass Universitäten ausreichend Augenmerk auf die Entwicklung von Fähigkeiten und Kompetenzen legen sowie eine berufsorientierte und professionelle Ausbildung ermöglichen sollten. Durch verpflichtende Praktika oder andere strukturierte Programme sowie die Verwendung von aktiven und problemorientierten Lehrmethoden könnten grundlegende Fähigkeiten und Kompetenzen innerhalb der Hochschulausbildung entwickelt werden. In Hinblick auf den Rekrutierungsprozess und die Qualifikationsanforderungen zeigte die Studie auf, dass der „perfekte Kandidat“ für das UNEP über folgende Qualifikationen und Fähigkeiten verfügen sollte: einen Hochschulabschluss, für den Arbeitsbereich relevantes Fachwissen, mehrjährige Berufserfahrung im Ausland und Kompetenzen, die notwendig für die Arbeit innerhalb der Organisation sind.

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1 Introduction

Since July 2004, the Erfurt School of Public Policy has been carrying out a research project called “Professional Education for International Organizations,” or PROFIO for short. This project aims to find out which skills and competences are necessary for careers at international organizations and how these can be acquired in one’s university education.

Taking into consideration the continual increase in international integration and Germany’s role in foreign political affairs, the question arises as to what extent Germany is prepared to become involved in international cooperation. A prerequisite for effective involvement is not only the budgetary contribution, but also the ability to send qualified personnel to international organizations that is prepared for the most challenging tasks and leadership positions. However, relative to its high budgetary contributions, Germany remains underrepresented in terms of the number of its professional personnel at many international organizations. The research project PROFIO examines success determinants and educational programs for careers with international organizations. The main goals of the project are as follows:

- an analysis of the recruiting techniques of a sample of international organizations with regard to the qualification profiles and factors determining the success of applicants and staff;
- an analysis of the educational and professional backgrounds of employees in the professional category at these international organizations;
- an examination of German and foreign degree programs and other educational opportunities that are classified as being especially helpful for a career with international organizations;
- the development of a model for the ideal educational offerings, including extracurricular activities.

To attain these diverse goals, PROFIO applies different methods. One central tool is the carrying out of qualitative interviews with human resources directors, staff responsible for recruitment and regular employees. Second, quantitative surveys aim to shed light on the educational and professional backgrounds of people that are working in international organizations.

One of the main objectives of the PROFIO study at the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is to collect detailed information about the educational and professional backgrounds of employees in the professional category. Our goal is to investigate whether there are any patterns in the education or skills of successful employees at the UNEP. Another objective is to gain insight into the recruitment policies and selection processes. We are interested in how recruitment processes are organized, which criteria are used for choosing the most suitable candidates and, in general, the employees’ opinions on the recruitment procedures. In addition, another aim is to gather useful recommendations for educational institutions on how to best prepare students for careers at international organizations. To achieve the stated objectives, semi-structured interviews were carried out with UNEP employees in the professional category at the headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya.

There are various reasons why we chose to examine UNEP in greater detail. One is that the recruiting mechanisms and personnel structures of the United Nations in general have already been the focus of various studies in recent years.¹ UNEP as a “technical program” of the UN General Assembly had not yet been examined with regard to its recruitment techniques, qualification profiles, and factors determining the success of applicants and staff and the professional background of their employees. Here, UNEP is of particular interest to us, as its headquarters is located in a developing country rather than in an industrialized one. Working conditions, qualification requirements, and the employees’ tasks and responsibilities may differ from those in international organizations based in an industrialized country. Moreover, the low representation of German citizens at UNEP in proportion to Germany’s political weight and financial contributions to this organization is another reason to examine its personnel structures and recruiting procedures.²

This report is structured as follows. First, UNEP’s activities and functional structure will be briefly described so as to assist the reader in understanding the variety of tasks and responsibilities UNEP employees can have. Furthermore, an overview of the personnel structure, including the post categories and terms of employment besides permanent positions, as well as the recruitment and promotion procedures will be given. Following an explanation of the procedures and methodology used in this study, the research findings will be described in the final major section. This is where the responses from all the qualitative interviews will be analyzed and compared to each other in order to draw plausible conclusions about the skills and qualifications UNEP employees need in order to successfully perform their tasks and whether these abilities are effectively taught at institutions of higher education. Finally, recommendations to future applicants as well as for universities will be taken from the results in order to provide clear and useful information to those interested in careers at UNEP.

2 The United Nations Environment Programme

2.1 Activities and functional structure

As previously mentioned, this report shall not attempt to provide a comprehensive description of the role and functions of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), as this is not the focus of the PROFIO study. However, it will give a brief summary of UNEP’s recent activities and organizational structure in order to provide an understanding of the organizational setting in which the research subjects are working and the variety of tasks and responsibilities they can have.

¹ For example: Berliner Initiative (2002): Förderung deutscher Präsenz im System der Vereinten Nationen. Berlin: Berliner Initiative.; Göthel, Dieter (2002): Die Vereinten Nationen: Eine Innenansicht. Berlin: Auswärtiges Amt.; United Nations (1950): Report on recruitment methods and standards for the United Nations and the specialized agencies / International Civil Service Advisory Board. New York: United Nations.; Hüfner, K. (2001). "Gibt es eine deutsche Personalpolitik im VN-System?" Deutsche Gesellschaft für die Vereinten Nationen - Policy Paper 1/2001. Retrieved July 29, 2004, from <http://www.dgvn.de/publikationen/dgvn-polpap-01-1.htm>.

² See page 10 for more details on the low representation of Germans at UNEP.

UNEP was established in 1972 by the UN General Assembly,³ following recommendations of the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, to serve as a focal point for environmental action within the UN systems. It should be noted that UNEP is not a specialized agency of the United Nations, but a sub-organization of the General Assembly.⁴ UNEP's main tasks are to facilitate international cooperation in all matters affecting the human environment; to ensure that environmental problems of wide international significance receive appropriate governmental consideration; and to promote the acquisition, assessment, and exchange of environmental knowledge. For this purpose, UNEP identifies and analyzes environmental problems, elaborates guiding principles for environmental protection, develops regional environmental protection programs, and supports developing countries in the establishment of national environmental protection programs. UNEP also supports a broad range of public education programs designed to combat the mismanagement of natural resources and to build environmental considerations into development planning. Being based in Africa with its headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, gives UNEP a firsthand understanding of the environmental issues faced by developing countries.

Many UNEP projects are implemented in cooperation with other UN agencies, particularly UNDP, the World Bank group, FAO, UNESCO and WHO. Furthermore, to accomplish its tasks, UNEP further works with a wide range of partners, including national governments, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and civil society. It also sponsors international conferences, plans, programs, and agreements regarding all aspects of the environment.

Every two years, UNEP publishes a report on the environmental situation in the world in which it lists examples of damage and development. Through its "State of the Environment" reports, it acts as a catalyst within the UN System on environmental matters. Recent priorities have included climate change, fresh water resources, deforestation and desertification, protection of wildlife and flora, handling of hazardous wastes and toxic chemicals, preservation of coastal areas, the effects of environmental degradation on human health, and biotechnology.

UNEP derives its finances from the regular budget of the United Nations and from voluntary contributions to the United Nations Environment Fund. The Environment Fund to which member states pay voluntary contributions was established by the UN General Assembly in 1972 and is the main source of funding for UNEP's activities. Since the establishment of the Fund, 169 countries have made at least one voluntary contribution to it, and twelve countries contributed the same amount annually.⁵ In 2005, the budget of the program was 58.96 million US dollars. Germany was the second largest donor to the UNEP, contributing some 6.6 million US dollars from the budget of the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, and

³ General Assembly resolution of December 15, 1972.

⁴ Unser, Günther (2003): *Die UNO: Aufgaben, Struktur und Politik*. München: dtv, pp. 88-89.

⁵ UNEP. (2006). "Environment Fund." Retrieved March 2, 2006, from http://www.unep.org/rmu/en/Financing_of_UNEP/Environment_Fund/index.asp.

Nuclear Safety.⁶ Further funding for UNEP activities is provided through Trust Funds and Ear-marked contributions.⁷

UNEP is represented across the globe by regional offices in Africa (Nairobi, Kenya), Asia and the Pacific (Bangkok, Thailand), Europe (Geneva, Switzerland), Latin America and the Caribbean (Mexico City, Mexico), North America (Washington, D.C., USA), and West Asia (Manama, Bahrain). In addition to these, UNEP supports various centers of excellence such as the Global Resource Information Database (GRID) centers and the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC). It also hosts several environmental convention secretariats including the Ozone Secretariat and the Montreal Protocol's Multilateral Fund, CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora), the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention on Migratory Species, and a growing family of chemicals-related agreements, including the Basel Convention on the Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes and the recently negotiated Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)."⁸

The organizational structure of UNEP encompasses the following organs and governing bodies: the Governing Council, the Committee of Permanent Representatives, the High Level Committee of Ministers and Officials, and the Secretariat.

The UNEP's functional structure is as follows:

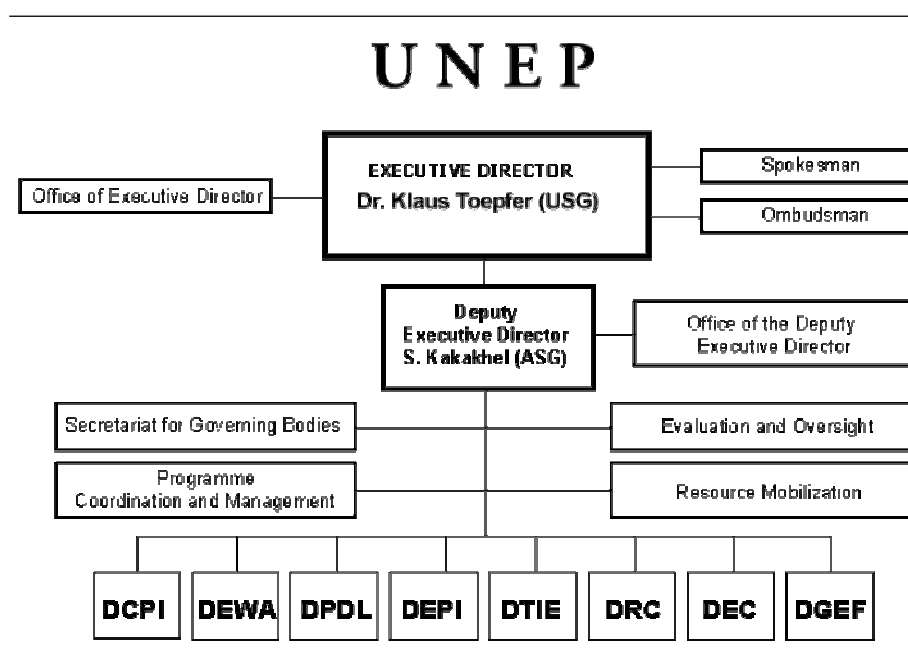


Figure 1: UNEP functional structure⁹

⁶ UNEP. (2006). "Contributions to UNEP's Environment Fund 1973 - 2006." Retrieved March 2, 2006, from http://www.unep.org/rmu/en/Financing_of_UNEP/Environment_Fund/Table_Byyear/index.asp.

⁷ UNEP. (2006). "Financing of UNEP." Retrieved March 2, 2006, from http://www.unep.org/rmu/en/Financing_of_UNEP/index.asp.

⁸ UNEP. (2006). "About UNEP." Retrieved March 2, 2006, from <http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=43&ArticleID=3301&l=en>.

⁹ Source: UNEP. (2006). "Functional Organigram." Retrieved March 2, 2006, from <http://www.unep.org/Organigramme/>.

Offices and divisions at UNEP headquarters include the Office of the Executive Director; the Secretariat for Governing Bodies; Offices for Evaluation and Oversight, Program Coordination and Management, and Resource Mobilization; and Divisions of Communications and Public Information (DCPI), Early Warning and Assessment (DEWA), Policy Development and Law (DPDL), Policy Implementation (DEPI), Technology and Industry and Economics (DTIE), Regional Cooperation and Representation (DRC), Environmental Conventions (DEC), and Global Environment Facility Coordination (DGEF).

2.2 Personnel structures

As the focus of this study is on recruitment procedures and qualification requirements, an understanding of the personnel structures, post categories, and types of employment is necessary. Furthermore, a brief summary of entry-level opportunities will be given, as this study also aims to give recommendations to graduates pursuing a career at UNEP on how to best prepare themselves for such positions.

In general, employees at UNEP are separated into three post categories:

1. D-staff are directors who are expected to have a Ph.D. and extensive background in their area as well as management experience in a large organization.
2. P-staff are professionals usually in possession of an advanced university degree and relevant professional experience. P-1 and P-2 are entry-level professional positions which do not normally require any extensive work experience.
3. G-staff are general employees who make up most of an organization's staff and have low levels of responsibility compared to those in the other categories.

Post categorization within the UN System is used for organizing jobs and levels of responsibility in a particular order. Furthermore, it helps to group together similar or comparable jobs according to the functions to be performed and the skills, knowledge, or experience needed. Recruitment criteria and salaries and related allowances differ between two main groups of staff: the professional and higher categories, and the general service and other categories recruited locally.

As previously mentioned, the focus in this study is on staff in the professional categories and higher (from P-1 to D-2). The table below gives an overview of the post categories:

Grade	Typical title	Category	Years of work experience
D-2	Director, Head of Division	Professional	More than 15 years
D-1	Deputy Director, Principal Officer	Professional	Minimum of 15 years
P-5	Senior Officer, Head of Section	Professional	Minimum of 10 years
P-4	First Officer	Professional	Minimum of seven years
P-3	Second Officer	Professional	Minimum of five years
P-2	Associate Officer	Professional	Minimum of three years
P-1	Junior Professional Officer	Professional	Minimum of three years

Table 1: Overview of positions in the professional categories

With regard to the distributions of nationalities in the professional categories, 25 German represented 4.96% of all internationally recruited staff members at UNEP in 2005 (as at June 30, 2005).¹⁰ In the same year, Germany contributed around 11.26% to UNEP's Environment Fund. According to the criterion of representation based on financial contributions, Germany is underrepresented: with 4.96% of the staff member in UNEP regular budget positions being German and Germany's contribution of 11.26% to the Environment Fund, there is a difference of - 6.3%. In other words, there is much room for improvement based on this representation measurement.¹¹ The following table gives an overview of the distributions of nationalities in the professional category and the countries' contributions and pledges to the Environment Fund in 2005:

Member States	Occupied professional posts in 2005 (n = 504)	Percent of occupied professional posts in 2005 (n = 504)	Payment/pledge in 2005 (amount in USD) (n = 58,961,600)	Percent of contributions
Kenya	32	6.35%	0	0
UK	28	5.56%	7,986,720	13.55%
Germany	25	4.96%	6,641,934	11.26%

¹⁰ As at June 30, 2005 there were 504 professional posts occupied at UNEP. Source: UNEP (2005). Report of the Executive Director. Staffing in UNEP. Nairobi, UNEP.

¹¹ This measurement is not an official policy of the United Nations but rather one pursued by many industrialized nations in order to ensure proportional representation. Article 101 of the UN Charter calls for staff to be recruited on the basis of "the highest standards of efficiency, competence, and integrity" as well as from "as wide a geographical basis as possible." Geographic representation targets do not apply to all staff positions in the UN organization that have established them. A certain number positions are subject to geographical representation from among the professional and high-level positions. (See U.S.G.A.O., U. S. G. A. O. (2001). "United Nations: Targeted strategies could help boost U.S. representation." Retrieved August 05, 2004, from <http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=gao&docid=f:d01839.pdf>.) The UN Secretariat Table of Member States' Representation as at December 2004 shows Germany to be within the desirable range above midpoint of geographic representation, including UNEP regular posts. The source of this information is a letter we received from the Human Resource Management Service.

Netherlands	25	4.96%	6,003,878	10.18%
US	25	4.96%	6,000,000	10.18%
Canada	18	3.57%	2,058,894	3.49%
Japan	17	3.37%	3,230,000	5.48%
Italy	16	3.17%	2,886,960	4.89%
France	16	3.17%	4,000,000	6.78%
India	12	2.38%	100,000	0.16%

Table 2: Distribution of nationalities in the professional categories and financial contributions¹²

Although the PROFIO study concentrates on permanent appointments in the professional category; however, it is also important to mention that there are other types of work contracts available at UNEP. The first group is temporary appointments of duration of less than one year (maximum: 11 months). Here, candidates may be selected outside of the Galaxy¹³ process through a roster kept for this purpose or through internal postings. After 11 months, the person would have to take a one-month break before taking on further employment at UNEP. Furthermore, UNEP offers special contracts with a fixed period of employment for particular assignments (e.g., consulting or expert contracts). Here, the benefits are similar, but the funding and duration are different. All staff members recruited through Galaxy initially join UNEP on a one-year fixed term appointment. The contract may be renewed for two-year periods if the post is determined to be of a long-term nature. The renewal is based on satisfactory performance and continued funding.¹⁴

For graduates with limited work experience UNEP offers two entry-level opportunities. For entry-level positions (P-1/P-2), the UN and its agencies, funds, and programs recruit staff through the annual National Competitive Recruitment Examinations (NCRE). These exams are only open to citizens of countries not sufficiently represented in the UN. The candidates must be fluent in English, hold at least a first-level university degree in one of the occupational groups (e.g., finance, human rights, or administration), and not be older than 32 years of age. The examination consists of a written test and an interview. Candidates who have passed the NCRE are put on a roster of qualified candidates for future openings. It is important to note that passing the exam does not entitle the candidate to immediate employment; several months to a year or more can pass until the successful candidate is actually offered a job.

The second entry-level opportunity is the Junior Professional Officer (JPO) Programme. It is managed by the UN Secretariat and provides young professionals pursuing a career in the UN System with hands-on experience. United Nations member states are responsible for recruiting and financing the young professionals. After an intensive pre-service training in New York

¹² Sources: UNEP (2005). Report of the Executive Director. Staffing in UNEP. Nairobi, UNEP. and UNEP. (2006). "Contributions to UNEP's Environment Fund 1973 - 2006." Retrieved March 2, 2006, from http://www.unep.org/rmu/en/Financing_of_UNEP/Environment_Fund/Table_Byyear/index.asp.

¹³ Galaxy is the United Nations' e-staffing system where all UN vacancies are posted. See: <https://jobs.un.org/Galaxy/Release3/vacancy/vacancy.aspx>.

¹⁴ The source of this information is a letter we received from the Human Resource Management Service.

and a period of on-the-job training, they are expected to assume considerable responsibilities at country offices of the participating UN agencies in the developing countries under the supervision of a senior staff member. Junior Professional Officers are usually involved in the identification, design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the UN agency-supported programs, but their tasks can vary and may have a country-specific, regional, sector-based, or thematic focus. Candidates for the JPO Program must possess an academic qualification – namely, a master's degree or equivalent in a development-related subject with focus on the social, economic, political, historical, and cultural aspects of development –, fluency in at least one of the working languages used by the UN, and working knowledge of another foreign language. Although relevant work experience is not one of the formal requirements, candidates with exposure to a professional environment are preferred (one to two years of work experience). The candidates' background must show a demonstrated interest in development and a commitment to work in developing countries. The candidates should also possess certain personal characteristics that will allow them to adapt quickly to living and working conditions in developing countries. JPOs are normally under 30 years of age.¹⁵

The following chart gives an overview of entry-level opportunities for graduates pursuing a career at UNEP.

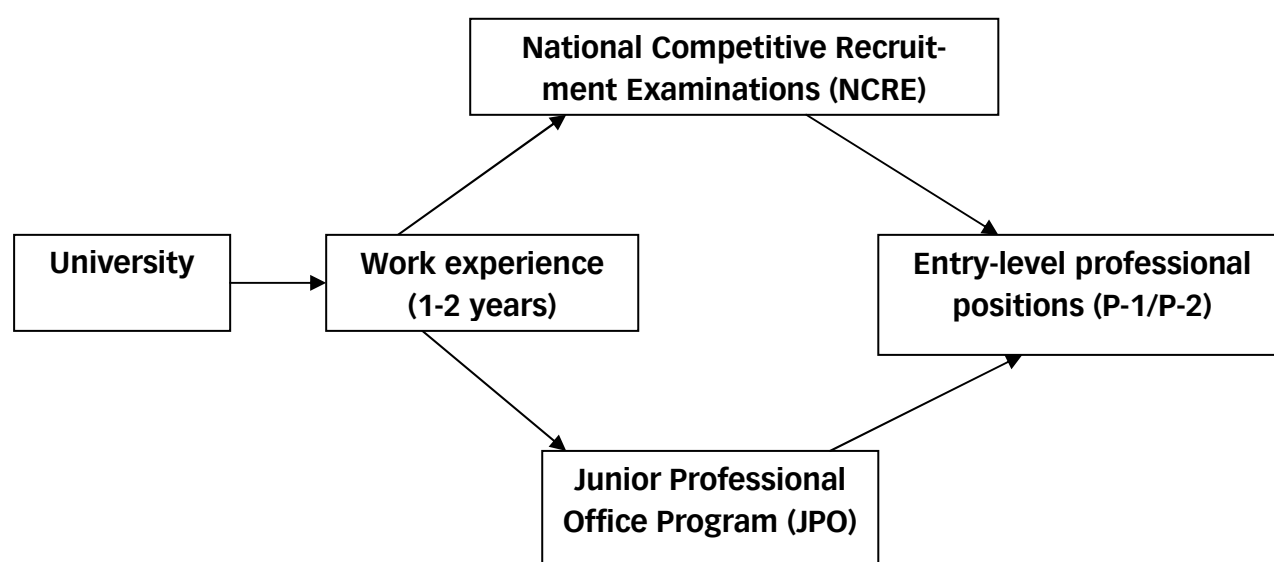


Figure 2: Entry-level opportunities for graduates with limited work experience

The UNEP offers an internship program to graduate students for a period of at least three months. Its aim is to provide students with practical experience which complements their field of study. Applicants must be enrolled in their third or fourth year of an undergraduate degree or in a graduate or postgraduate program. Furthermore, they should be fluent in at least one of the two working languages (English and French).¹⁶

¹⁵ See for more information: Centre, J. S. (2006). "The JPO Programme." Retrieved March 12, 2006, from <http://www.jposc.org/html/ie.html>.

¹⁶ See for more information: UNEP. (2006). "Internship Programme." Retrieved March 2, 2006, from http://www.unon.org/intern_ship/?ses=&ctfo=7&ctid=3&ctsub=16&ctno=INTERNSHIP+PROGRAMME.

2.3 Recruitment and promotion procedures

Staff members for permanent positions in the professional categories and higher are recruited internationally. All recruitment and promotion procedures as well as evaluation criteria at UNEP are governed by the human resource management policies of the United Nations System. According to UN policies, recruitment, placement, and promotion activities aim to promote a system that attracts the most talented individuals meeting the requirements of the open vacancies with special regard to candidates from underrepresented countries and women.¹⁷ In filling vacancies, special efforts are made to recruit from as wide a geographic area as possible, in order to achieve equitable representation among member states as closely as possible. Furthermore, all recruitment and promotion activities are taken in compliance with the gender distribution goals set by the UN General Assembly. All selection decisions are supposed to base on objective, job-related criteria and merit. The vacancy announcement outlines the major responsibilities, desired qualifications, and competencies necessary for successful performance. Concerning the organization of recruitment and promotion processes at UNEP, the procedures are mainly managed by the Central Review Body (CRB), the Human Resources Management Service (HRMS), and the Program (Hiring) Manager.

At the first stage of the process, for the creation of new positions, the substantive or hiring office sends their proposal to the Central Review Body and the Human Resources Management Service. Then, the HRMS classifies the post, and the CRB verifies that the evaluation criteria of the vacancy announcement reflect the requirements of the post prior to its advertisement in the Galaxy System. After the vacancy announcement is posted on the intranet and internet, the HRMS is mainly accountable for reviewing the applications and screening the eligibility of all internal and external candidates as well as releasing them to the program (hiring managers) at intervals of 15, 30, and 60 days. The 15- and 30-day releases are limited to internal (UN) staff members; the 60 day release is for external candidates. Thus, the HRMS ensures that the consideration of external applications takes place only after reviewing all internal applicants. Before external candidates are screened for eligibility by the HRMS, all internal candidates (15-day or 30-day mark) are reviewed first and have the chance to be selected for the suitability screening. Furthermore, it ensures the objectivity and validity of all evaluation criteria used during the selection process at UNEP by confirming that all pre-approved selection criteria have been applied.

The Program Managers are responsible for screening the suitability of all eligible candidates, both external and internal. If necessary, they conduct written tests and set up panels for competency-based interviews. They are accountable for making selection decisions of the most suitable candidates. These decisions should be based on objective, job-related criteria and merit and at the same time take the principles of geographical representation and gender balance into consideration. The decisions of the managers must be confirmed by the Central Review Body, which determines whether the selection process was conducted in compliance with established procedures, that the managers presented a reasoned and documented decision, and that the pre-approved selection criteria were applied throughout the process.

¹⁷ See Secretariat, U. N. (2002). Secretary General's bulletin ST/A1/2002/4: Administrative Instructions. Staff Selection System, United Nations Secretariat. Here, the UN Secretariat's system, policies, and procedures for recruitment, appointment, and promotion are described.

The Head of Department makes the final decision when the CRB finds that the evaluation criteria have been correctly applied and that the applicable selection procedures were followed. If a list of qualified candidates has been approved, the Head of Department may select any one of those candidates. The other candidates who are short listed but not selected are placed on a roster and constitute a pool of qualified candidates for future positions. The Human Resources Management Service assesses this roster on behalf of the Program Manager when posts arise with similar responsibilities and evaluation criteria. The following flow chart gives an overview of the recruitment process at UNEP.

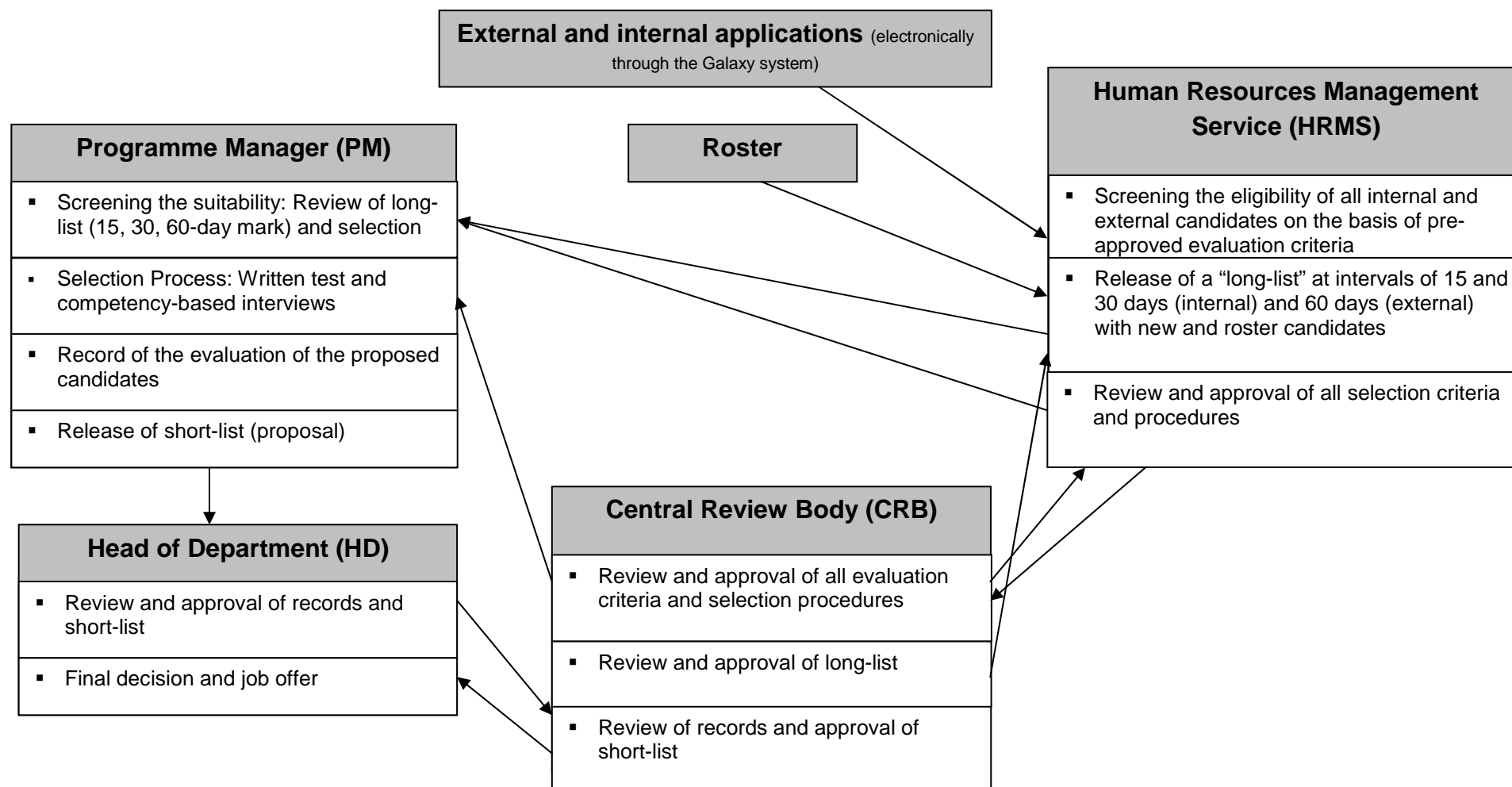


Figure 3: Flow chart of the recruitment process at UNEP

Staff members are required to remain in one position at UNEP for two years to be eligible for promotion to a higher level. However, if staff members wish to apply for a vacancy at one level higher than their current level and have had a lateral move – a move to a different position at the same level –, then they will be eligible to apply after one year service in their current functions. As the promotion process is linked with the recruitment process at UNEP, the same mechanism and procedures for filling vacancies are applied.¹⁸

2.3.1 Evaluation criteria

Evaluation criteria or success factors for recruitment at UNEP revolve around meeting the specific qualifications (knowledge of relevant subjects or fields, experience in related areas, languages spoken) and competencies required for the vacancy in question. As previously mentioned, the success factors governing recruitment decisions are outlined in the vacancy announcement and job description: the responsibilities, desired qualifications, and competencies necessary for successful performance. However, in the following, a brief summary of the core requirements for professional positions as outlined the UN Human Resources Management policies will be given.¹⁹

Knowledge

One core requirement for professional positions is an advanced university degree (master's degree or equivalent) in the respective or an appropriate area of study. The candidates' degree should be in a discipline that is relevant to the type of job they are applying for at UNEP. A first degree with a combination of relevant academic qualifications and extensive experience may be accepted as well.

Years of experience

Work experience is another important factor for assessing the candidates' suitability for professional positions at UNEP. However, it should be mentioned that this requirement is counterbalanced by an assessment of the candidates' competencies. For certain professional positions the number of years of work experience differs:

P-2: Minimum of three years

P-3: Minimum of five years

P-4: Minimum of seven years

P-5: Minimum of 10 years

D-1: Minimum of 15 years

D-2: More than 15 years

¹⁸ The source of this information is a letter we received from the Human Resource Management Service.

¹⁹ See Secretariat, U. N. (2002). Secretary General's bulletin ST/A1/2002/4: Administrative Instructions. Staff Selection System, United Nations Secretariat.

Competencies

The United Nations Secretariat has defined organizational core values and competencies necessary for successful performance on the job. The competencies are described as “the skills, attributes and behaviours which are considered important for all staff of the Organization, regardless of their function or level.”²⁰ They should define the quality of talent recruited and relate more to what a person does than what a person knows. Specific professional or technical competencies are not included in the model of United Nations competencies, as individual departments define functional competencies related to their respective areas of work. Within the UN System, the competencies are used for human resources processes such as recruitment, placement, and development and performance appraisal. Hiring Managers are required to include competencies in generic job descriptions and vacancy announcements so that they can be used as evaluation criteria for individual posts. Moreover, interview frameworks and other assessment tools are developed to incorporate competencies into recruitment and placement decisions.²¹ The UN competency model presented below was developed through an intensive participatory process (interviews, consulting) involving staff and managers of the UN.

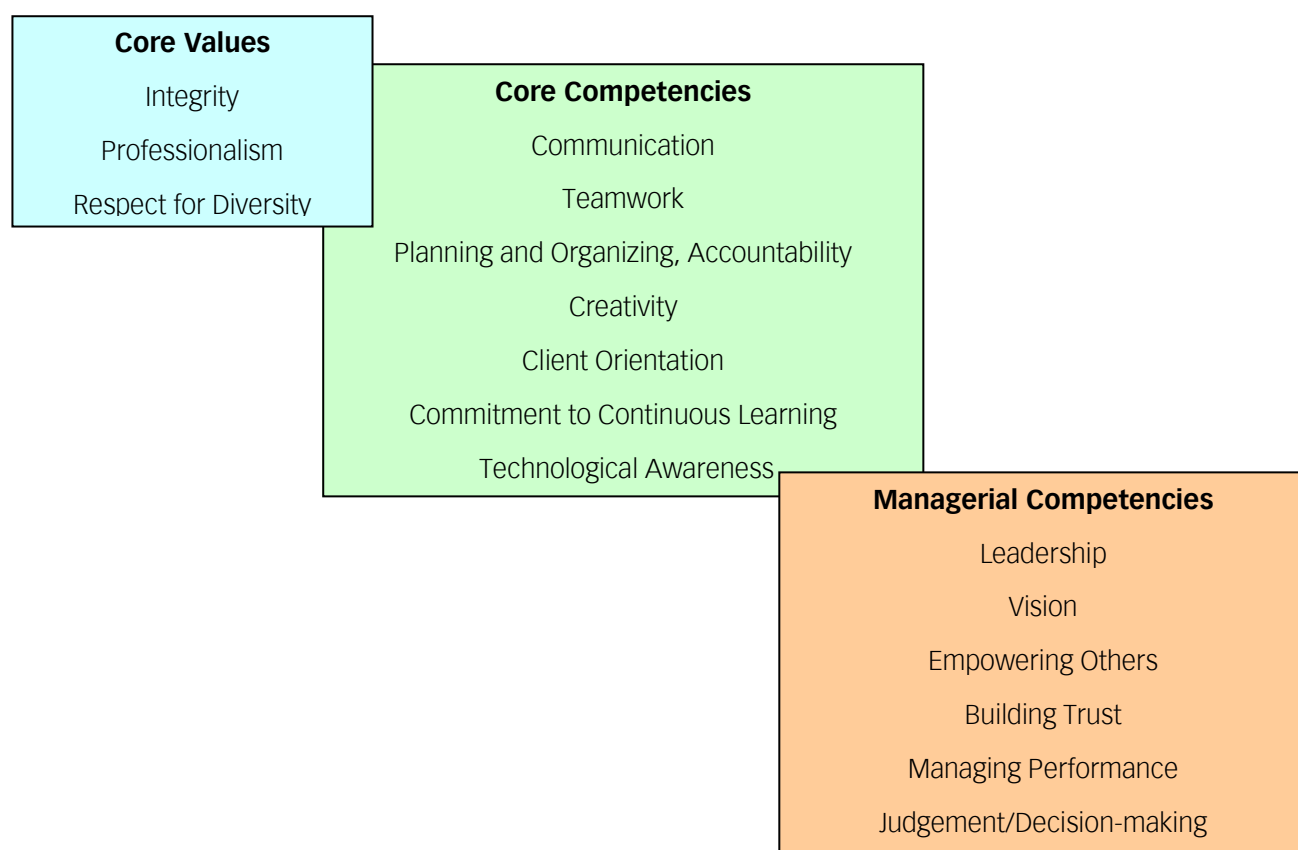


Figure 4: The UN Competency Model²²

²⁰ Source: United Nations Office of the Human Resources Management. United Nations Competencies for the Future. New York City.

²¹ A detailed description of the competencies and their behavioural indicators – descriptions of what each competency should look like in practice – can be found in Appendix 1.

²² Source: United Nations Office of the Human Resources Management. (2002). Career Support Guide. New York City.

Areas of Expertise

Another substantive requirement is expertise. Expertise in the disciplines of environmental, natural, and social sciences is required for the following divisions at UNEP: Environmental Policy and Law; Environmental Technology, Industry and Economics; Environmental Early Warning Systems; Biodiversity, Land Degradation, Marine and Coastal Waters Expertise, Ozone Issues, Conventions and Law, Communications and Public Information.

Language skills

For all professional positions at UNEP, fluency in oral and written English is required. Knowledge of a second official UN Language (Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian and Spanish) is an advantage.

3 Research design

To achieve the stated objectives of the PROFIO project, qualitative research methods were applied. In studies like that of PROFIO in which the subject matter under investigation is fairly undeveloped, qualitative methods are valuable to identify and define relevant terminology, variables, underlying concepts, and possible connections between phenomena which might be difficult to detect through other means.²³ Furthermore, exploring the complexity of individual educational and professional backgrounds as well as understanding perceptions and evaluations requires a focus on the individual. Qualitative interviews are a unique tool for detailed investigation of peoples' personal perspectives and for detailed subject coverage, as the exploratory and interactive nature of qualitative enquiry gives the research subjects the possibility to "describe their experiences in their own terms" in interaction with the researcher.²⁴

20 semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with UNEP employees who have a permanent appointment in the professional category (from P-1 to D-1) were conducted by two members of the PROFIO research team.²⁵ This particular category of staff was selected with regard to the specific questions addressed by the study. One of the main objectives of the PROFIO study at the UNEP was to collect detailed information on the educational and professional backgrounds of employees in the professional category and to thereby gain insight into the recruitment process. All interviewees had an advanced university degree and several years of professional experience. Furthermore, most of the UNEP employees who were interviewed were able to contribute relevant information on how decisions on the suitability of candidates are made, as

²³ Ritchie, Jane; Lewis, Jane (2004): Qualitative Research Practice. A guide for social science students and researchers. London: Sage, p. 40.

²⁴ Ritchie/Lewis (2004): p. 34.

²⁵ The selection of the interview participants was done by the Office of the Executive Director with help of the Human Resource Management Service. They provided the PROFIO research team with names and e-mail addresses.

they were either Program (hiring) Managers of their division or staff members who were somehow involved in the selection process of their unit, for example, as part of an interview panel. Furthermore, some staff members of the Human Resources Management Service took part in our study. The interview participants differed in terms of nationality, sex, and age.

The interviews conducted were based on a topic guide setting out the key topics and issues to be covered during the interview.²⁶ However, the structure of the interviews was sufficiently flexible to permit topics to be covered in the order most suitable to the interviewee and to allow the researcher to be responsive to relevant issues raised spontaneously by the interviewee. The interview questions, or ‘topics’, were derived from the research questions and stated objectives of the PROFIO study. All interviews were conducted in English. The interviews were recorded in order to be analyzed in detail at a later time. Each interview was transcribed in full length. When reviewing the data, the PROFIO research team identified main themes or categories under which the qualitative data was labeled and sorted. This process included a combination of multiple readings and continual returning to the data until no further dimensions of the categories emerged. Finally, the qualitative data was compared, related, and contrasted to identify patterns in the education or skills of successful employees at UNEP and map the diversity thereof. All interview and survey participants were assured of the complete confidentiality of their responses in keeping with professional research standards.²⁷

The following table presents the steps taken for carrying out the study:

Step	Procedure
1	The Office of the Executive Director granted permission for the PROFIO research team to carry out the study.
2	The Human Resource Management Service provided the PROFIO research team with names and e-mail addresses of UNEP employees in the professional category.
3	An e-mail with a project description, an explanation of the procedures, and an invitation to participate in an interview was sent by the PROFIO research team to the chosen employees.
4	Qualitative interviews with UNEP employees in the professional category were carried out from November 9 to November 19, 2005 .
5	Qualitative interviews were transcribed and analyzed.
6	The Human Resource Management Service and the Office of the Executive Director will receive the preliminary version of the research findings to be published. The report will then be published on the website www.pro fio.de .

Table 3: Steps taken in carrying out the study

²⁶ For a complete list of the topics covered during the interviews, please refer to Appendix 2.

²⁷ The PROFIO research team guaranteed data protection of standards under the terms of European and German law. Protection of the privacy of all participants was ensured through anonymous data collection, data aggregation, and analysis on an aggregated data level. No connection was made between the persons taking part in the study and the answers they have given. No third party had access to the data set. It was further guaranteed that the collected data will be used only for the purpose of the research project (PROFIO).

4 Results

In this section, the main findings of the PROFIO within the UNEP study concerning the selection process, educational background, skills, qualifications, and preparation are presented.

4.1 Comments on the recruitment procedures

One of the main objectives of the study at UNEP was to gather relevant information on its selection procedures. We were interested in how recruitment processes are organized, which evaluation criteria are used for choosing the most suitable candidates, and the employees' general opinion of the recruitment procedures. In section 2.3, we described how the recruitment and promotion process should be according to the UN human resource management policies. However, as most of the interview partners were either Program (hiring) Managers or staff members involved in selecting personnel, for example as a member of an interview panel, we were able to gain more insight into the selection process in general and gather more detailed information on the evaluation criteria and tools used for selecting candidates in particular. Therefore, the following comments give a more "subjective" picture on how recruitment functions at UNEP rather than an "objective" picture on how it should be in the "ideal case".

In general, most of the interview participants rated the selection processes as such and the way selection decisions are made as "transparent", "fair", and "objective", as the following statement indicate:

"So we always try to be very careful not to screen out too many. But at the same time, we cannot interview a lot. It is time consuming, etc., etc. But we really try to be fair to people, to give people a chance. Especially when it comes to external candidates."

Although most of the interview participants mentioned following the formal selection policies, rules, and guidelines set by the Human Resource Management Service, some of them admitted that they take into account recommendations from colleagues or other people when assessing the suitability of candidates. They valued recommendations from outside as "helpful" when reviewing more than 1000 applications and selecting the most qualified candidates. They stressed that paying attention to references from other people is not against the procedures and rules, as they "will not do anything but make sure that his or her CV is given a proper look" and "nothing else." The following statements given by the interview participants show how they deal with such recommendations:

"And again, when I have a thousand applicants -- or even 140, which is what I have sitting there -- somebody calls me and says 'You know, I know somebody that has been working in this... and they applied for that job.'" Then I will purposely pull out their CV and I will look at it and they definitely get a valued review and we try to give valued reviews to everybody but again I have to look to 140 and it is eleven o'clock at night because you do not have time to do it during the day and you are looking at the last one and you are half falling asleep, you might miss some. It is a fact. And you might miss the best candidate if you do not have the time, and you do not. So, if somebody says 'Please, look at this person.' then okay. I do not say you put them on the top of the list but they get a good review."

"There is a myth that needs to be understood better and applied fairly which is that you have

to know someone in order to get a job in the UN. That is true and not true at the same time. With 800 applicants for one job, it is very easy to just accidentally overlook someone. I mean looking at 800 CVs is quite cumbersome every time. And if you are applying out of the blue, yes, your chances of being noticed on the basis of this long examination are after all, very slim. What helps is if someone can say, 'You know the gentleman that I mentioned earlier who I think would be a very good P-4 for the organization?', what I will do – which is perfectly within the rules – is to send an e-mail to my director of the division. "

Another aspect mentioned by the interview partners that could influence the selection decision to some extent is special interests from UN member states and their governments. Some of them pointed out that they try to resist **political pressure** from UN member states when selecting candidates, particularly concerning the geographical representation, as the following statement underlines:

"Of course, sometimes we have pressure. We are in the real world. Sometimes we have pressure from ambassadors, from ministers [who say] "Hire this guy." And these pressures we have to resist, it is just not possible. But, I mean, it is manageable."

In addition to the interests of member states, the interview participants mentioned that **gender balance** and **geographical representation** (in this case, the official quota system created by the United Nations for the purpose of recruiting staff according to a wide geographical distribution) are further decisive factors when selecting suitable candidates. As mentioned in section 2.3, according to the UN human resource management policies, hiring managers must especially consider candidates from underrepresented countries and women when making their selection decisions. As the following comments made by the interview participants show, hiring managers are *"instructed to look for developing country candidates first and foremost"*, and they further have to take the gender balance into consideration, as *"we need to have 50% representation of women in professional jobs"*.

"We are collectively instructed to look for developing country candidates first and foremost. If you are not from a developing country, you are very unlikely right now to get a job within UNEP. Simply because it has been found that we were a little bit behind in terms of our recruitment of developing country candidates."

"The third point here is, which country he or she is from? We are the UN here. We may not hire all Belgians and Germans because they have the most fantastic people in the world. It is impossible. We have to take this into account. And then we have to take into account the gender balance also. The gender balance for me, personally, plays a role when the other criteria are okay. If the other criteria do not make a difference between the candidates then I will see if we have a gender balance. But I would never hire a woman because she is a woman."

"Many times in the international arena, a lot of people from the Western countries are already there. So, they are highly represented. So we try to look also for people from developing countries because if they are good and they are from developing countries, then they would be favored because they are really underrepresented."

As further mentioned in section two, for the screening of candidates' suitability, the hiring managers can use competency-based interviews and written tests as selection mechanisms. The comments below emphasize that most of the interview participants rated the **method of**

interviewing as a highly “valuable” and “important” selection tool. As interviews allow them to assess the personality of the candidate as well as all values and technical, professional, and organizational competencies required for the particular job vacancy, they ensure that the most qualified candidates can be selected. Overall, interviews are rated as a valuable assessment mechanism as they “can confirm what they [the candidates] have said on their CV, and they can also tell you or explain to you what they mean and how they fit into a particular category.” Other statements were:

“Often, we do everything by teleconference, and sometimes, depending on the level of the position, we will then interview the selected candidate in person before we actually offer them a job. Because it is important to actually get to know the person a little bit and see beyond the paper and the phone. So, not getting actually a chance to spend a day with the person whatever, when you only have... usually we do an interview in less than an hour. And from that we have to make a decision.”

“I can tell you that the interviews are an invaluable part of the process. And it very often happens that when we look through the application we draw up on the short list, we have a sort of idea of who we think is going to come out best. And then when we do the interview, we totally change our opinion because even if it is a telephone interview, you learn so much by the interview. That gives you a totally different perspective on that person, and they even put things down on paper, when you investigate and you really look for the qualities and skills, it is amazing what you can tell from the interview. So the interview is very, very important, and it often changes our opinion totally of who we think is most suitable.”

“There might be one perfect CV where we are thinking, “This is unbelievable.” But in the interview, the people can hardly spell their name. Then you have other situations such as, “This is the most horrible CV but somehow interesting.” And then you see it is a great person. So we always try to be very careful not to screen out too many. But at the same time we cannot interview a lot [of candidates].”

Concerning the **interview questions** which most of the interview participants use for evaluating candidates, the interview participants said that they are mainly derived from the UN competency model or the vacancy announcement.

“Right now, interviews are moving away more from being to substantive to being more competency-based where they want to see, “What are your teamwork skills, what are your communication skills, what is your integrity?” So they give you scenarios that bring out those qualities in you. So there is a lot of competency-based interviewing.”

“In an interview situation we would have set questions. The questions that we would have drafted would come from the vacancy announcement. What we say we need in terms of a candidate, we would have already put in the vacancy announcement.”

Concerning individual interview questions, the UNEP employees emphasized that candidates are required to show how they would react in specific team situations by applying the experience they gained on the job or in other life situations. The candidates should demonstrate that they have the skills and ability to work effectively in an intercultural team, solve conflicts, set up work plans, and communicate appropriately with their coworkers. Specific professional or technical competencies not included in the model of the UN competencies but required for the position and outlined in the vacancy announcement or job description are tested as well. Some of the interview participants mentioned that the Human Resource Management

Service provided them with a set of questions for the assessment of the candidates' organizational competencies and core values. Furthermore, the interview participants mentioned that all Program Managers and other staff members involved in selection processes receive training in interviewing methods: how to best assess qualifications, skills, and attitudes. The following comments made by the interview partners illustrate what kind of competency-based questions they might ask during interviews:

"Normally, what we do is we start out with a kind of a general question, like in teamwork 'Can you please describe a case when you worked as part of a team?' And then they answer that part of the question. And then you have a series of sub-questions that go with that, like, 'Were you a team leader or were you a member of the team?' That is a simple question, but then depending on what the answer is, you can say, 'As a team leader, was there ever a case where you had to make a decision that was contrary to what the rest of the team wanted? How did they react? How did you persuade them to go your way? Or if you were a member of the team and you had what you thought was the best idea, how did you persuade the rest of the members of the team?' This is kind of the same thing but from a different angle. What we do is we ask for specific examples. So do not give us a theoretical thing that maybe you learned at school or you read but you say, 'Give me a specific example!'"

"So then we would interview... Most of us have now been trained in interview skills, and then interview skills in terms of... we would interview the candidate, we try to find out whether those skills are there in that person. For example, we would ask him about teamwork and when he has worked in a team before and asking, 'What if the team fails and there is blame to be shared? How do you deal with it, and how do you deal with a conflict situation in a team?"

"When we do the interview, we are focusing on the attributes and the competencies. [...] So they will be asked a number of questions and follow-up questions about them being a member of the team, what they feel are good leadership skill, whether they have them, and where they have their weaknesses, and those kinds of things. So in the interview, we try to focus on those things which you cannot put down on paper."

In addition to the competency-based questions, the employees who were interviewed mentioned that they also put sufficient emphasis on the candidates' **motivation** or their **career paths** and whether they are able to highlight and relate steps in their career to the specific position he or she is applying for. In this context, some of the interview participants stressed that they are looking for key words in the CV or cover letter that are related to the particular job.

"To me, it is important to give that person as much opportunity to speak and explain themselves, how things fit together, how their background fits, for them to relate their experiences to the job that you have. That is why I say it is an old question, 'Why are you the best person for this job?', but it gives them the opportunity to make those connections. And if they cannot make the connections very well, then, again, there is a problem."

"But usually, I like to start out asking the person how they see themselves fitting into the job and a very basic question of, 'Why are you the best person for this job?' It is an old question but I think it is still a valuable question because the person has a chance to talk and you have a chance to listen to how they talk. How do they relate themselves to other things? If you ask a question that has a very short answer, you do not get to know the person."

Beyond the competency-based interviews, some of the interview participants mentioned that they use **written tests** as selection tools, as these give them the opportunity to evaluate the candidates' analytical, drafting, writing, and language skills necessary for successful performance on the job.

"Depending on the job at hand, usually some written exam would be very good to begin with because it shows you how a person's thinking is, [his or her] understanding of the problem, and their approaches to a problem. Because when you give them a written test, it would revolve around the problem which would be applicable to what you want and to be considered for being hired. So when you give them an opportunity to express themselves in writing, you can see it from what they are writing. That way, you can narrow down to even fewer individuals whom you later call for interviews in order to discuss with them about their experiences, what they have done, and to learn from them how all these positive attributes which you are looking for in them were used in their career development before you may hire them."

"Depending on the process how we will get somebody, we will do the phone interview, and then we would get the personal written test. Two questions you know. Not necessarily to find out the substance, but to know how people write. Because we write a lot here, we write all these reports. And if people cannot write, then they can become a burden for the rest. It is not that. One thing is that you speak well and another thing is the way to write. So we very often do the written tests."

As previously mentioned, success factors for recruitment are specific qualifications (knowledge and expertise, professional experience, languages spoken) and competencies required for a particular position. In this study, UNEP employees who are involved in selecting staff were asked about the criteria they use for assessing the candidates' suitability and on which they place the most emphasize. First of all, the interview participants pointed out the importance of the **substantive requirements**, such as a master's degree, foreign language skills, work experience, and expertise in an area relevant to the position in question. According to most of our interview participants, these formal criteria are always considered, in particular at the very early stages of the selection process when the applications are reviewed:

"At a very early stage, we have to identify the evaluation criteria. So when we get the CVs, eventually these are the criteria we will use to evaluate the people. Again, it is very linked to what we want them to do. So there is the substantive, there is the educational background, languages, etc."

With regard to one's **educational background**, most of the interview participants said that the candidates' degree should be in a discipline that is relevant to the type of job they are applying for at UNEP – preferably in environmental, natural, or social sciences. However, the following statements shows that a management-type degree could be very beneficial, as management skills are required in all divisions of UNEP:

"Nowadays [we would look for] a Master's in Business Administration, Financial Management, Management, those areas... successful candidates would probably have only a first degree and have come up through the ranks. [...] So, in the administrative areas, that is more the driving force."

Although a master's degree is regarded by most of the UNEP employees who were interviewed as a substantive requirement for any professional position, some of the interview participants stressed that it should not be overestimated, as it does not tell much about the candidates' personality and competencies necessary for working at UNEP. Therefore, they regard it as a more 'formal' requirement than a criterion that really affects their selection decision, as the following statements show:

"Of course, one of the criteria – in fact, what they call a professional background – is a master's degree. I'm not sure if that is a very good criterion, because a master's degree doesn't make you qualified in itself. But at the end of the day, on the paper, they have to put some minimum standard in terms of what is required, and that is just a requirement."

"For me, education it does not play a big role. There are stupid people with fantastic diplomas and very clever people that have none. This is my experience. But, of course, in the UN we have constraints. Unfortunately, and I am not saying that by idealism. No, my experience in work is there are stupid people and there are diplomas... it matches a little bit but I do not count on the education to tell you if the guy is good at work, at teamwork or not".

In this context, one interview participant stressed that the difficulty of comparing degrees makes the evaluation of the candidates' educational background more difficult, as the following statement illustrates: *"They do not look at what a master's degree is in Western Europe [compared] to a master's degree in Burkina Faso. In some countries, you can buy a master's; in other countries, you have to work hard for it".*

Another substantive requirement for professional positions mentioned by the interview participants is **work experience**. As the following comments show, candidates – particularly those who apply for higher professional positions – should be able to demonstrate that they have gained significant work experience abroad and in different sectors and positions. Candidates must show that they possess management and leadership skills, as well as certain personal characteristics that will allow them to adapt quickly to living and working conditions in developing countries.

"They would rather have somebody who has been all over the world, been through the system, been through ranks, maybe has a little private sector experience. They would like someone who has worked in different parts of the UN System and certainly different countries, in a variety of administrative roles, managing HR, you know."

"Secondly, have they been working in an international situation? Do they have this sort of element of experience? Sometimes we look to see about... we look for developing country experience because a lot of our work we do with developing countries. So, for instance, if we were recruiting somebody on capacity building, we would have wanted them to have that experience, not just to have taught in Oxford or something and then come here and expect to, you know, deal with things on a different level."

"If you are on the entry level, sometimes you do not have that experience, and then we look at other qualities. When you are looking at somebody more senior and if they do not have it then, again, it is difficult for me to, even if everything else is well written, if they do not have the international experience and they are coming into a job where international experience is quite important, then it would be difficult for me to continue looking either."

In addition to work experience and one's educational background, another success factor for being hired at UNEP is **expertise** in an area relevant to the job in question. As previously mentioned, expertise in the disciplines of environmental, natural, and social sciences is very beneficial for being successful at UNEP. The interview participants involved in the selection process rated this criterion as important. One UNEP employee even regarded it as *"the main substantive requirement of the recruitment"*.

"Most of our jobs are rather specific. And we require recruiting somebody who has got expertise in fresh water in marine areas or we are recruiting somebody who has got expertise in publication process. Whatever it happens to be, they are quite specific. [...] Those kinds of things are always considered in the process, but the type and range and in-depth expertise that they have developed is very important."

Another formal requirement mentioned by the interview participants is **foreign language skills**. According to them, fluency in oral and written English is required. But knowledge of a second official working language of the UN (French, Arabic, Chinese, Russian, and Spanish) or another foreign language is considered to be an advantage.

"Here in our headquarters we hire plenty of people with just English language skills and without another UN language. It is helpful to have that other language, but it is not one of the UN languages that would actually help you in terms of writing official documents or anything like that. Certainly in communication with others it helps. So any language is helpful. Certainly UN languages are most helpful."

"So languages are important, and in some cases, they can be a deciding factor and in other cases [they are] less important because here in the headquarters everybody speaks English. French is probably the second most popular language in our headquarters, and it is helpful to have French, but if you do not have it, you can get by."

Beyond the formal requirements, most of the interview partners mentioned that they use the **UN competencies**, such as teamwork, communication, and leadership skills, as evaluation criteria for the selection of staff:

"So there is the substantive, there is the educational background, languages, etc. And then there is what they call the UN competencies. And there we usually, again depending on the type of job, try to select three, four, or five. Again, if it is with managerial experience and they need some competences in that, you know, teamwork. If it is someone who has to write a lot of documents than they need some communication or writing skills. So it all depends on the job."

"In the UN, we have few competences which guide us. The HR has drawn up general guidelines which should give us an indication of how we go about assessing people. And when you look at them, they are not something which are very specialized to the UN per se. As I said, they look at, number one: the person should be quite qualified in the area for which you want to hire, and then you look at attributes in that person, like how good a team player are they?"

In addition to the formal requirements and UN competencies, some of the UNEP employees who were interviewed mention that they also look whether the candidate has **knowledge of the UN system**.

"We look for people who are solid in the area where we are looking for a person to come and work in. For example, we have one area where we are dealing with the planning aspects of the program, so such a job would have been advertised, and then we would look for strong skills in planning. But then, apart from those specialized skills, we want somebody who understands also the parameters of the institution, the UN in this case. So that they know how the UN functions and what to target their work to. So that it will be much more meaningful. So a good understanding of how the UN works will supplement very well and then you know the typical rules of a global working environment."

Summarizing the comments made by the interview participants concerning the evaluation criteria used for selecting staff, it could be concluded that the "perfect candidate" UNEP would look for is someone who has a master's degree, sufficient work experience abroad, expertise in an area relevant to the job in question, and competencies and values necessary for a successful performance on the job:

"They will ask for a mixture of... they might need someone who actually has a mix of environmental experience – postgraduate of course – but they must have expertise in different political skills, negotiation, alliance building, etc."

"If I am looking for a first position here, for a first position you will need an academic background or at least few years of experience. So if the experience is the right one, the academic background is the right one for a person that is knocking at the door, then I will be looking for a person that can demonstrate – even if they are a recent graduate – that can demonstrate that during their studies they were exposed to demands of a multicultural organization, that they were exposed to addressing issues within a multicultural organization, that they got some sensibility on the types of problems that you will be dealing with if you are dealing at a technical level or you may run into problems with policy issues at the beginning."

4.2 Educational background

All interview participants earned a master's or comparable degree. As the focus was placed on employees in the professional category, this result is not surprising: One formal requirement for positions in the professional category at UNEP is a postgraduate education. Very few interview participants have earned a Ph.D. When considering the area in which the interview participants obtained their academic degrees, it can be stated that most of them have a multidisciplinary background. The interview participants studied the following subjects in their master's and bachelor degrees:

Business and economics (accounting, finance, marketing, management studies, etc.)	Very often mentioned
Engineering (electrical engineering, environmental engineering)	
Natural sciences (biology, chemistry, geology, physics, geography, environmental science)	
Humanities (history, literature, philosophy, religion, anthropology)	

Education	
Communication studies (journalism, public relations, media)	Often mentioned
Political science	
Social and behavioral sciences (psychology, sociology, social work)	
Law	
International studies (international affairs, international relations)	Mentioned less often
Public affairs (public policy, public administration, public management)	
Modern and classical languages	

Table 4: Major and minor subjects studied in bachelor and master's degree

Here, it is clear that the subjects most frequently studied among the employees who were interviewed were in a financial or management-related area (e.g., business administration, accounting, and finance), a technical area (e.g., engineering) or in environmental and natural sciences (e.g., geography, biology, ecology), and humanities (e.g., history). When comparing these results with the requirements for professional position, it is apparent that the employees' educational backgrounds correspond with the areas of expertise required for being hired. Most divisions at UNEP require people to have expertise in the disciplines of environmental, natural, and social sciences.

With regard to the combination of degree programs, most of the interview participants combined a technical sector or environmental/natural science degree program with a management- or finance-oriented degree program, as the following comment shows:

"I studied as an undergraduate biology with focus on microbiology, so ecology, that type of thing. [...] Following that, I started working with the government while also doing graduate studies in environmental resource management and public administration."

Some UNEP employees who were interviewed continued their formal education after graduating from university by pursuing other postgraduate degrees or being involved in "life-long learning" activities. For the purpose of specialization or additional qualifications aside from their university education, some interviewees obtained certificates after their studies, as the following statements show:

"I did a postgraduate certificate in organization and development. [...] So, I wanted to professionalize because I feel it is very important to have a body of knowledge that you can give somebody."

"After I graduated, I worked three years. In that time I also earned a certificate for financial analysts."

Concerning the interview participants' educational backgrounds, it can be concluded that a combination of technical sector/natural science degree programs with management- or finance-related degree programs seems to be a good means of preparing oneself for a career at

UNEP, as it provides one with the qualification and competencies needed for positions in the professional category at UNEP. Some of the interview participants who are involved in selecting staff also indicated that expertise in one specific functional area of UNEP and/or a master's degree in a management- or finance-related area could be very helpful for being successful.

4.3 Evaluation of university education

One very important issue in the context of the PROFIO research project is the employees' evaluation of their university education in preparing them for their current field of work. When analyzing the data collected, one must keep in mind that all interview participants already had several years of professional experience and that their answers to the retrospective question about their university education and level of job preparedness can thus only be answered in view of these experiences. This is, however, precisely what the PROFIO survey hoped to obtain: a subjective evaluation in light of professional experience rather than an 'objective' picture of what universities do.

Overall, the interview participants were quite content with what they learned at university, as the following comments show:

"Maybe I have been a little lucky to work in an area of the organization where most of the training which I had in school was quite relevant."

"But if I just think about the content, I think the content was quite good. We had a lot of things, a lot of papers to work on, a lot of group exercises to work on. So, I actually I cannot think of anything currently that could improve because I am quite happy with everything."

Most of the employees interviewed said that their university education provided them with the **substantive knowledge** and skills specific to their field of work, such as ecology, geography, agriculture, financial management, and so on:

"I would say it was pretty good in terms of the substance. I mean, I did geography and I did ecology for coursework. I did physical geography, biogeography, and those kinds of things which are very closely related to a lot of environmental issues. It gave me a very good understanding of basic ways that things work in the natural world. [...] Things to do with soil biology and things to do with plant ecology and physical events, all these kinds of things, I have a basic understanding... So it was pretty good."

Furthermore, as the following statements show in an exemplary manner, most of the interview participants mentioned that their university education provided them with the **analytical and critical thinking skills** they need on the job, including the ability to identify a concept or problem, to dissect or isolate its components, to organize information for decision making, to establish criteria for evaluation, and to draw appropriate conclusions.

"I think what we get from university is a lot of tools. It is a way of doing things. It is a way of analyzing. It is a way of approaching a certain problem in a structured way. You know, that is what we very often get. It is not how to develop a budget. It is more as a tool. But the tool can be applied to a certain extent."

"I think there is this aspect of the university that develops analytical powers in you [...]. It is

your university education which gives you that grounding, that analytical sense, the sense of research methodologies that you have."

"So I think what I got from my degree mainly is how to solve problems, how to tackle a new area, how to approach it and how to gain information about that area. But it is not like I have used very concrete subjects from my degree in the work I do."

When asked what was lacking from their university education that they need in their current field of work, most interviewees referred to **practical training**, which they see as important for the development of professional skills. They mentioned that universities provided them with the academic training, but the practical training in which one acquires and develops basic management skills, teamwork skills, and other competencies or qualifications one might need on the job, was lacking.

"University gave me the scientific operation, which maybe I am not actually using so much now. But then it was mainly the experiences I had after university. Maybe because the university is designed, or it was at this one I attended, that way that you do not have almost any working experience while you are studying. You just study and take your exams. But to go for an internship and see, you know, I have to organize little things, you grow and you learn how to organize yourself and how to organize other things and maybe the work of other people also and so on. So, it was mainly, I think, the experience after... through working that I actually learned what I am using now for many things."

Furthermore, some of the employees interviewed mentioned a lack of **flexibility in educational programs**. They said that it would have been beneficial for their career development if their university education had offered them the opportunity to choose between a greater variety of courses and combine degree programs in different disciplines.

"If I look back, I think that the current system is much better, where you can do a bachelor in economics and a master in political science. Now you have a much better possibility of combining different fields in order to fit your future career perspectives much better."

"And it would certainly be a benefit to have had courses that give you a basic understanding right across the border if you could. In those days, I think, degree courses were much narrower. And you did not really have the opportunity to mix geography and economics and any other. But nowadays, I think, you can tailor it. You know, we were on a course [of study] and you did those courses and that was it to get your degree, whereas now, you can pick much more... That is a real advantage, because you can build up a set of things which, if you know where you are going, then it helps."

As the following statements illustrate, one interview participant mentioned that his or her university education could have done better in teaching **IT and computer skills**:

"The other issue I would have liked is if I had more skills in IT, because IT tends to be something which is helpful. It tends to make you spend less time on a process so that it frees you to be able to deal with bigger issues."

Another interview participant stressed that his or her university education did not provide him or her with **substantive knowledge about the UN system** also necessary for a successful performance on the job:

"From my experience something that I never received and either in my studies or within the UN is really a lesson on the UN. What is the UN System all about? And there are many things that I cannot answer today even though I have been in the UN now for eight years and will probably stay, and there are certain things I will probably never know which would be helpful if I did know and it would take some time now for me to figure them out if I wanted to."

Summarizing the presented results concerning the interviewees' evaluation of their university education and the job preparedness, it can be concluded that they felt that their university education did well in providing them with analytical and critical thinking skills, as well as substantive knowledge in an area relevant to their current field of work. However, it can be stated that universities could do better in providing practical training which is regarded as important for skills development and gaining initial practical experience.

4.4 Professional experience before working at UNEP

One very important qualification for working at UNEP is likely to be the practical and professional experience that was gained in employment prior to one's current job. Therefore, it is no surprise that all UNEP employees who were interviewed had previously gathered professional experience. The following table gives an overview of the sectors in which the interview employees worked prior to their current job at UNEP. Here, the interview participants had the opportunity to mention more than one previous place of employment.

Public sector (e.g., multilateral international agencies, non-profit organizations, non-governmental organizations, government, public foundations, public administration)	Very often mentioned
Private sector (e.g., private companies, organizations, agencies, foundations, private consulting firms)	Often mentioned
Academia (e.g., universities, research centers)	Often mentioned

Table 5: Professional experience before working with UNEP

The areas in which they had their professional experience were primarily in the international or national public sector, the private sector, and academia. Almost all interview participants stressed the importance of their work experience for the acquisition of knowledge and skills. Some of the interview participants mentioned that their work experience was very beneficial for acquiring competencies such as teamwork, intercultural, communication, and management skills that they needed for their current job at UNEP, as the following statement exemplarily underlines:

"Having spent quite a few years of my life in politics makes me know how human beings are when they are in tribes, in groups, how... human beings negotiate. How do people react and

why? And this helps you to work in a big organization because you know what happens in the company or UNEP."

As previously mentioned, most of the interview participants worked in the international public service already before taking on a position at UNEP. Those who worked for one of the UN funds, agencies, or programs (such as UNHCR or UNDP) prior to this job view their experience as being very useful for their current field of work, as the following statement shows:

"I definitely think that my experience in UNDP was very valuable. I think that helped a lot."

Two interview participants mentioned that their professional experience from within the UN System was the reason they were hired at UNEP, as it provided them with knowledge on the UN System, its working conditions, and a technical and working knowledge of the governments and political systems with which the UN cooperates.

When the interview participants were asked about **internships** and **volunteer work**, most of them mentioned having done one or more internships (e.g., at UN funds, agencies, and programs) and/or that they were involved in volunteer work (e.g., United States Peace Corps or United Nations Volunteers) during or after their university studies. Most of them gained their practical experience abroad and valued a variety of experience. With regard to job preparedness, the interviewees stressed the importance of their volunteer work and internships for the development of highly relevant skills and competencies, such as intercultural, language, communication, social, analytical, and management. Furthermore, they said that their internships and volunteer work provided insight into government agencies, non-governmental organizations, consulting firms, or international organizations and, most important, the way they function. By gathering work experience that is directly related to their chosen field, they were able to learn about the work environment, tactfulness, and professionalism. In this context, some of the interview participants indicated that their internships and the volunteer work they have done helped them to discover their job preferences and where they want to go in their career.

"People always want somebody experienced. If you do not have experience, how do you get the job? Well, in my case, what I did was I did a volunteer position, or I went and worked over in international grassroots activities. For me, that is what got me a job when I had nothing to do with the international aspect. [...] I immediately got a job when I started looking, when I got out, immediately without any difficulty. And I had not even finished graduate school at that point. So it was something that people saw as being a little different. [...] And that international experience opens your eyes to other cultures, other people, other ways of looking at things, other ways of understanding, and that is a key."

"I cannot overstress the importance of internships. I have done several internships as a graduate. [...] And in all those experiences, they really provided me with insight in my field of specialization but also in the difficulties to convey a message, to transmit information, to teach some people, or to learn from them. So, not only cultural boundaries are obstacles but [also] language barriers, social barriers, and cultural barriers in general; food could be a problem."

"I learned a lot when I was in volunteer work by my sole objective when I went to work with this program in order to see how effectively it could be used to promote the engagement of African consultancy in development projects. It gave me an opportunity of looking at things without having a motivation of money per se at the beginning. So that gave me very good op-

portunity of just concentrating to put in the best of what you have for the course which I was working for. And then this opens up your mind of being able to understand the problem, [and] how to have some solutions, too."

The interviewees who worked as Junior Professional Officers at UNEP rated the **Junior Professional Officer Program (JPO)** as a good means to prepare oneself for a career at UNEP or other UN agencies and programs. This is because Junior Professional Officers can be directly involved in the development and management of support programs. They said that the expertise and insight they gained through the experience on the job was highly valuable for their careers. Furthermore, they stressed that it enables them to obtain work experience in developing countries and helps them consider a career in the development field. Some of them mentioned that their experience as a JPO was the reason for being hired UNEP, as people were able to become acquainted with them and their work:

"That I got into the system... I am sure because I was a JPO. That is clear. I mean, JPO is one of the ways to get in. [...]. It is for sure an entry-point into the organization. And you see many of the JPOs remain in the UN, which is the whole objective of the government."

"JPOs I am sure... Automatically, one makes his way or her way into the ranks of the UN. Simply because he gets to know the system, knows so and so and then when he or she applies, the name comes up. It is normal."

"Although they say that it is not... you should never expect an employment based on JPO, but I think it is worth it for the one who is being the JPO. You get a glimpse of what it is like to work there, and in those years, you learn to know if you want to continue with the organization. And the organization also sees how you work and if you fit in."

When considering the statements made by the interview participants concerning their work experience prior to their current job at UNEP, it can be concluded that work experience abroad and in different areas is important for preparing oneself to work in the international public service, as one gains the experience and acquires competencies needed for a successful performance on the job.

4.5 Necessary skills and qualifications for working at UNEP

Another important issue in the context of the PROFIO project is the interviewees' opinions on which skills and qualifications are necessary for their work at UNEP. Here, we asked professionals about the skills, knowledge and attitudes they need for a successful job performance. Based on the fact that all employees had several years of professional work experience at UNEP or agencies and organizations in the international public service, it can be assumed that the question about essential skills and qualifications is answered in terms of those experiences. Therefore, the following comments should be seen as a subjective evaluation in light of their professional experience rather than an "objective" picture of what skills and qualifications are needed to perform the various tasks at UNEP.

In general, most of the employees who were interviewed mentioned that the range of skills and qualifications one might need to work at UNEP depend on the type of job he or she does.

Yet when analyzing the data collected, skills and qualifications were identified that the UNEP employees rated as very important and useful, regardless of which position one has.

For all professional positions at UNEP, the employees who were interviewed mentioned that **technical expertise** – the skills and knowledge specific to the areas of the program (e.g., economic planning, financial management, ozone protection, and biodiversity) – acquired on the job or during their studies at university is needed to perform successfully on the job.

"For some levels, you do need very specific qualifications and very specific experience. [For example,] if you are dealing with water, then you really need to have a background in water science and then the specific experience that you can adapt or replicate or transform into other environments, in other cultures, in other societies. So that applies to all the specific areas [...]. So, yes, you need studies that will be sometimes very specific on the subject depending if you are coming to do some very technical work here."

"I think, of course, because we are working on environmental issues, to have a background in environment and understanding what it is and what are the connections between the different components of the environment... That has to be there."

In addition to the specific technical skills, substantive knowledge and tools, some of the interview participants mentioned that a **working knowledge** of other sectors and areas is helpful for their jobs. As UNEP is a very complex organization with different programs, projects, and clients, a broad range of knowledge is regarded as useful to work and communicate effectively within and outside the organization:

"Besides the academic background or specific areas, people who may be working in an international organization should have a broader perspective of science if they are going to work in science-related issues. A broader perspective would mean to have a good understanding of all the national systems. But at the same time, you should have some kind of a specialty."

Furthermore, as the statements below illustrate, most interview participants said that basic **knowledge of the UN System** is crucial to perform the various tasks at UNEP. In particular, it is helpful to understand the structure of the UN System and how the UN agencies and programs operate. One interview participant further mentioned that knowing the rules and guidelines as well as the terminology and the vocabulary of the organization can be very helpful for being successful on the job.

"Knowing about the committees of the UN General Assembly, how the budget works, how things get done at the senior levels in New York are things that, unless you are really keyed into those, I would say most people who work here do not have a clue. Maybe you do not need to know, but it would be [...] very helpful if you did know."

"So without knowing the rules and guidelines of the organization, especially in my line of work where there are so many administrative instructions and guidelines on how to administer those instructions... and there are also the master rules and regulations on finances that we have to know for dealing with the UN and outside. So I would think that if you do not have a grasp of this, it will be difficult to be successful."

Some of interview participants mentioned that **analytical and critical thinking skills**, including the ability to ask questions, collect and analyze information, and develop solutions,

as well as **evaluation skills**, including quantitative and qualitative research methods, are very important for their current field of work.

"The best way is not the straight line because here we have the big mine field. Why do you want to go there? What do you want to achieve? So, you have to have good analysis skills. I want to achieve lead-free gasoline in Africa, which is something we do. Then you have to have a good analysis of the situation. Why is there lead in gasoline now? Of course, there are scientific reasons, but also there are political reasons. Who is doing that? What refineries? If we do it without lead, who is capable of investing in it? Why is this government in favor of it? So, you have to have good analytical skills."

"I think you also need to be, especially in this position, quite analytical because for this job it is in some ways quite research-based, doing evaluation... it is a lot of the same methods. How do you to acquire, collect, and analyze?"

"I would say kind of a strategic approach to things, thinking through things to make sure that they make sense, to make sure that they are coherent, that you are able to get from a policy concept to getting something done and all the steps in between. And then you can see what needs to be done. Because we have, I say, some brilliant minds that can think about policy, can think about concepts, but they cannot get things done."

To accomplish the tasks at UNEP successfully, most of the interview participants indicated that basic **management skills**, including administrative abilities, organization skills, and time management, are very beneficial, as the following statements show:

"Good organizational skills are also essential. So that the person knows when you are asking them to do something the kind of systematic approach to the problem in order to go through it with the maximum impact in terms of getting the right thing at the right time."

"Appropriate skills in planning, so that when you give people an assignment, they know how to organize themselves and plan how to do it, so that they do not spend too much time [on it]."

"Organizational skills are also very good. And a lot of other good qualities which would also equally be applicable to the private sector will be applicable to the UN."

In addition to basic management skills, some of the interview participants mentioned that **project management skills** are very crucial to their daily work, as project development and implementation are part of the UNEP's activities, alongside its monitoring and reporting tasks and its advisory role. Therefore, it is a highly valuable capacity to manage efficiently any kind of project.

"But I think what we really need are Program Managers. We call ourselves program officers here in the professional level in the UN. There are people who are trying to get programs done and not just be a policy advisor, for example."

"But also skills that you can acquire like also the project life cycle, project management, and so on."

Regardless in which department one works, most interview participants are of the opinion that **people skills** are very important in order to be successful and efficient at UNEP. In this context, most interview participants said that **teamwork skills** are highly valuable, as most of

the work at UNEP is done in teams. Therefore, they said that one should be able to work collaboratively with colleagues, encourage the ideas and expertise of others and coordinate work on complex plans. The following statements underline how important teamwork skills are at UNEP:

"You have got to really be a team player, because you are working as part of a big team – whether it is in your section or your division of UNEP or the UN... there are different levels."

"You want somebody who relates well, works well as a team member, because there is no work which you can do alone. In any unit or organization you will be required to work with other members. So how your work cooperates with the others in order to kind of complete the full set of tasks which either a unit or a department or a division is doing is a good qualification to have – working with teams."

"For me, teamwork is one of the most important of these qualities, these competences that are asked for in the UN, because to me it shows as well that if you have cross-cultural experience, can you interact with other people properly, can you work as part of the team even within your unit, or are you going to be off doing things on your own and sending out letters without thinking and without getting clearance and that type of thing."

"I would list one of them as teamwork, which is very, very important in this organization to work in an international environment."

Furthermore, most of the interview participants pointed out that **communication skills** – including presentation, rhetoric, negotiation, listening, drafting, and writing skills – are one of the competencies contributing to professional success. According to them, communication skills are needed in some of the most decisive situations that occur in the workplace – with colleagues, at meetings, during disagreements, and at negotiations. Therefore, it is important to speak and write clearly and effectively as well as listen to others. They mentioned that employees should be able to communicate their thoughts and ideas effectively, whether in a verbal or written format. If one wants to succeed at UNEP or other UN agencies or programs, one must know how to write clear, succinct, and grammatically correct business communications (e.g., letters or e-mails) for an international audience. Moreover, they stressed that the ability to write good project proposals, memos, or reports is an essential skill both for managers and for many of those who report to them.

"But I guess communication is something that you do not learn in the university. Well, you do... people are always assuming it is something that comes naturally, which it does, but then especially in this organization, it is very important."

"You need to be able to work in a multicultural environment, and I think that requires communication skills."

"It is very good if you are a good writer. I think not very many people are very good writers. [...] I mean obviously writing different languages, but you can write clearly and logically, can tell a story, and that is very much what we do here. You are doing evaluations. You basically tell a story. You say this is the story about this project, what worked, what did not work, and how it would have been better."

With regard to effective communication skills in cross-cultural contexts, three interview participants mentioned the necessity of **diplomatic skills**. To effectively work for the UN,

which brings together different countries with different interests, goals, and opinions, an enhanced understanding of negotiations and dealing with difficult people is a valuable tool to be successful.

"Then you have to have certain diplomatic skills. Again, we do things in one way, and you mean one thing by doing it. We can't be ironic, we can't be straight to the point, you can't use the same way of talking to people. At the end of the day, one thing in the UN you have to avoid is making enemies, unfortunately."

"I am talking with people in foreign ministries. I am dealing with them one-on-one, you know. I am dealing with foreign ministry representatives, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in the 13 governments with which we have agreements, I am dealing with government officials. So, some diplomatic skills would, I think, be very beneficial."

"You have to be an international diplomat – otherwise, you just rub people the wrong way. And you cannot work on that basis. So, I think one of the very important things is to be tolerant, to be respectful, to value other people's view points [...], because we all come from different places, we all have different experiences, but we have got to somehow work together to make it work, especially in the UN. So I think that is number one."

Another competency which is rated as very important by the interview participants is **social skills**, including **intercultural skills**. To work and communicate effectively with people from all backgrounds, one should be able to take into account aspects such as political ideology, religious affiliations, demography, and economic, social, cultural, and geographic realities. Working in a multicultural environment requires **adaptability** and **flexibility**, which involves unlearning old patterns of thoughts, feelings, and actions.

"I think if you want to work in the international context, you have to be very, very conscious of national differences. You have to be much more geographically conscious, sensitive to cultures and all the cultural diversity [...]. You need to be much more culturally conscious of these diverse backgrounds in terms of culture."

"You have to be extremely flexible and accommodating in many ways. You have to be able to adapt to new situations and to working in a multicultural environment. And you have to understand that nothing is right and nothing is wrong when it comes to culture and ways of doing things. Because our... our way of doing it, or the European way of doing it is not more right than the Asian way of doing it. It is just different. And when you mix all these cultures, you have different ways of approaching all issues and all problems."

With regard to **language skills**, most of the interview participants mentioned that proficiency in English is a requirement for any professional position at UNEP, as all written and spoken communication is done in that language. However, they further emphasized that speaking a second (or third) language, particularly a working language of the UN, is crucial. The employees mentioned that it could help to strengthen each person's communication abilities and intercultural competencies, as relationships could be built up more easily.

"I think the most important thing for me – and this may be personal because it is based on experience – I think that possessing more than one language is very important to be able to deal with work... global types of work."

"Languages are very important as well. [...] It also helps you in communicating with other people if you speak their language. I mean, here all people speak English, but if you can speak in

French to the Africans coming in from the French-speaking countries, it is much better.”

“I think speaking a different language is very important. I think whoever wants to join the UN should at least speak two, three languages. You cannot just want to join the UN and speak only German. It is impossible.”

In the opinion of some interview participants, **client orientation** is another competency contributing to success on the job. Some of our interviewees mentioned that one needs to consider all those to whom services are provided as “clients” and know how to work and communicate with them.

“We deal with that a lot. It is a constant query from governments whether what you are doing is a demand-driven activity or a donor-driven activity. And understanding that is very important, and knowing how to work within it is even more important.”

“I would also say that you need to have client orientation. You are required to have a good professional attitude [...]. Otherwise, you are not approachable and you are difficult, it will make the life very difficult to offer the program, and it will make it very difficult for them to implement their programs. So client orientation is very important.”

In addition to specific skills and competencies, most of the interviewees emphasized the importance of certain attitudes, values, and behaviors which are very useful for their work. Some of them mentioned that **dedicated** and **hardworking** people who want their work to make a difference in the world are most successful in their jobs.

“You have to be committed. I mean, it is better to be committed. It is like in every job. I mean, it is the UN here. You are not selling shoes. Of course, there are some people certainly who could sell shoes or work in the UN or whatever, which I respect because you need money. But if you are committed, it is easier. If you are not committed, you might be really quickly fed up with the bureaucracy.”

“But to be successful you always have to be hard-working. You have to demonstrate that you can deliver and that you are willing. I guess it’s the same as in the private sector.”

Summarizing the statements made by the interview participants concerning the skills and qualifications needed for their current field of work, it can be concluded that a broad range of skills and qualifications were seen as very important. The following chart gives an overview of which skills, qualifications, experiences, and character traits one needs in order to achieve a successful performance in one’s job at UNEP:

Knowledge and Expertise	Skills and Qualifications
Technical expertise: <i>background knowledge for your current occupation</i> Detailed UN knowledge: <i>knowledge of the UN system, functions and roles, bureaucracy</i>	Social skills: <i>ability to deal with conflicts, interpersonal skills</i> Intercultural competence: <i>ability to deal with people from different backgrounds</i> Teamwork skills: <i>assertiveness, task delegation, ability to motivate others, leadership skills, conflict management skills</i> Analytical skills: <i>ability to identify and solve a problem, critical thinking</i> Communication skills: <i>presentation skills, rhetoric, writing skills, negotiation skills, diplomatic skills</i> Language skills: <i>ability to speak at least one foreign language</i> Management skills: <i>administrative abilities, organization skills, time management</i> Project management skills: <i>ability to manage and deliver projects</i> IT/computer skills: <i>ability to use computers, "computer literacy"</i>
Attitudes and Behaviors	
Commitment Flexibility and Adaptability Hard-working Client orientation	

Figure 5: Required skills, qualifications, and attitudes

Therefore, when comparing the presented results with the competencies outlined in the UN competency model, it can be concluded that the UNEP employees who were interviewed in this study mentioned most of the skills, qualifications, attitudes, and values which are considered important for all UN staff.²⁸

4.6 Recommendations to future applicants

In the interviews, the UNEP employees were also asked to give specific recommendations to graduates pursuing careers in the international public service in general and at UNEP in particular.

As the minimum requirement for any position in the professional category at UNEP is a graduate degree, it is not surprise that most of the interview participants stressed the importance of a master's degree. The academic training offered at university is seen as a good means to acquire most of the technical expertise and the critical thinking and analytical skills needed for any position at UNEP.

"So what I would say is, whatever your skills are, just strive to make them as good as possible while you are in school. Also when you are in school, try to have a little bit of some broad-based education so that you can relate whatever skills you have to the bigger objectives of the organizations which you may have to work with later, because while you may be special-

²⁸ See Figure 4 on page 18.

ized in an area the organizations work, there is also the understanding of who you are working for, which tends to be the government.”

In addition to a graduate degree, they recommended that students should focus on gaining practical skills targeted at their future employment. In this context, most of the interview partners mentioned that **gaining work experience abroad** is the most effective way of preparing oneself for a career at one of the UN agencies and programs, as it helps in acquiring the skills and qualifications needed for one's future job. They rated internships, traineeships, and volunteer work – all of which can be performed either independent from or in the context of graduate programs – as very good learning experiences and opportunity for professional skills building. In particular, with regard to learning how to work and live with people from different backgrounds, they stressed the importance of gathering professional experience abroad instead of or in addition to in one's home country. Concerning professional skills building, two interview participants mentioned that it is important to find an employer that offers a *“substantive assignment that is going to keep you busy, because this is really what helps to prepare you to join an international organization.”* So people should make sure that their internships provide real involvement in the actual work of the organizations and thus an opportunity to develop professional skills. The following statements illustrate the importance of professional experience:

“So internships together with a broad but specific academic background and learning about what work is all about would be good. And that cannot be substituted by a lack of experience. If the students go out after five, six years of university, ‘Here I am,’ they will not get a job.”

“It also helps to have had experience with things outside your own country if you work in an international organization. Partly for the reason that I have said that the world is made up of such a diverse geography and groups of people, but also because it gives you a broader perspective. I do not think you can get that perspective just by always living in one place and focusing on your own area and perhaps just watching the news for half an hour a day or so, international news. You will not get the same experience and foundation unless you have experienced it yourself.”

“I think they should try to either study or work abroad. I think it is important not to be too fresh in a sense – that they should try to practice, go to another country, and try to live there [...]. You can try to get the international experience which looks good on your CV and you also learn a lot. How it is to be the only representative of your culture in another culture.”

“I think they should do lots of internships and find small jobs and things like that, travel. I think it is important that you show that you are interested in working in different countries, and if you want to work in an international environment that you are not afraid of going to a developing country.”

Moreover, two interview participants pointed out that internships or any other kind of preparatory experience are a good way to get to know people and build relationships, which can be helpful for career development as they can provide one with professional support and information on the field of work one is interested in.

“But internships are a great way not only for you to get to know people [and] to get to know the work but it gives you exposure to the type of work so you can decide what area you might want to work in. So internships, of course, are very helpful.”

Besides the networking aspect, some of the interview partners mentioned that internships and volunteer work are essential tools to determine whether you are interested in and capable of working in international public service.

Some of the interview participants said that the Junior Professional Program (JPO) and the United Nations Volunteer Program (UNV) are good entry-level opportunities for graduates who are pursuing a career at the United Nations.

"The JPO program is good. The volunteer program is very good. Other things I have seen working are that an internship also leaves a good name somewhere where you go, just that you volunteered and did well. You will leave a name, a mark in that organization."

"Another program that would help you to join the UN is a junior professional program which is offered by governments."

In general, most of the interview participants stressed the **importance of diverse work experience**. Since careers in the international public service are dynamic, they stressed that one will need a broad range of skills and a high degree of flexibility to respond to changing responsibilities and organizational contexts. Therefore, most of them rated static career paths which consist of work experience gained solely in one sector as not very useful, since one would not gain insight into other organizational structures and acquire the necessary amount of flexibility. On the other hand, as some of the interview participants highlighted, it is always important to find the right balance: Too many internships or short-term assignments are not always seen as an advantage. Therefore, they recommended that graduates be careful and more strategic in choosing their jobs.

"Diversify your experiences, I would say. Go work there and there, and then you will learn new things. I do not know many people who have a career like a laser beam. It does not exist. Or if it exists, it is not good for an employer. Today, in the position I am now, if I had to choose or give my advice on the choosing of a manager in the UN or UNEP, I would not favor people who have been in the UN for 20 years. Why? Because we are not working behind closed doors. We are part of the real world here. So it is better to know the real world."

"And I think working internationally, it helps to be well-rounded in the work that you do because the work is defined almost daily in the UN. It is not something that is static and you are doing the same thing every day. You have a different challenge because something new has come up or there is a new emerging environmental threat that you have to deal with or there is a new rift between two countries that you have to work out or that kind of thing. So it is not a static thing. So different experiences in different ways are helpful."

"That is another piece of advice, I would say. Because when we look at people's CVs, if they have changed their job every six months and they have done three months at this and four months of that, it looks like they are not able to hold down a job and stick with something. And I think you have to try and strike a good balance, you know, go into something for a few years but when you are young, do not stay there too long because it is better to get a bit broader experience in a number of areas."

Furthermore, the interview participants emphasized the **importance of networks** for one's professional career: family, friends, fellow alumni, colleagues, and other people one met

along his or her career path. These networks can offer support and help, as they might have connections with the organization in which one seeks employment. In this context, one interviewee recommended that graduates should become involved in the work of youth forums and other associations specifically designed to promote networking among and for young professionals. They provide a good venue for exchanging ideas and experience and allow one to meet people who have the same interests.

"Again, if you wanted to work in UNEP, then you would be participating in those youth networks already and understand the issues. You would also gain a lot of experience and a lot of exposure to people that way. Because the UN is not special or different in this regard that when you know somebody, you do not necessarily get the job because you know them, but rather [it just helps you to] get your foot in the door. And then, if you are qualified, then you can get the job."

Furthermore, most of the interview participants gave specific recommendations to graduates for making it through the application and selection process at UNEP. First of all, they stressed that applicants should gather information about the position they are applying for and the hiring department.

"And another thing I would recommend to people... if somebody is applying for a job, really try and research what that job is about and something about the division that is recruiting. Because invariably they will be asked in an interview [something like] we have got such and such a program, what do you know about it? And it is very, very easy to look it up on the website and see what is there and pick up a copy of two or three reports the group has done."

As for the application, they recommended that one should use **key words** on the front page of the CV, cover letter, or application form to highlight personal strengths, qualifications, and interests that are relevant to the particular job. This would help the person who is reviewing applications to determine whether or not the applicant is suitable for the position.

"If you are an applicant who is truly good enough for the job, you would be able to see in the job description what the key words are. For example, if I have a job available in biodiversity, and nowhere in your application or your cover letter do you mention the word biodiversity, there is probably something wrong. Either you did not do any biodiversity, which means you are probably not qualified, or if you are not smart enough to figure out that you had better use the word biodiversity when you are applying for a job that says it is a biodiversity job, then we probably do not want you."

"You have an opportunity on the front of the application to say why you want the job or to give extra information. Put some of these key points in there that will be read immediately on the front page!"

"One of the things that I could recommend is that when they fill in the application they highlight the areas of their educational experience which are relevant to the particular job. Quite often, people do not do that."

Moreover, as the personal interview is seen as an important assessment mechanism within the selection process at UNEP (see section 4.1), the interview participants recommended that graduates should prepare themselves well for the interviews. They should be able to highlight their strengths and qualifications, and most important, relate them to the par-

ticular position for which they are applying. According to them, any kind of **interview training** would be helpful to prepare themselves for selection process.

"I should be able to connect, if you look at your life as your experiences and your education as a kind of straw, the building blocks of your life. And if this is the job you want, then you should be able to relate all those blocks back to that job. If you cannot, then maybe the job is not right for you. It does not mean you are not a good person, it does not mean you cannot get another job, but maybe the job is not the right one for you."

The ability to present oneself convincingly as the most suitable candidate for a particular job requires **confidence** and **self-awareness**. Some of the interview participants recommended that graduates should assess their preferences, potential strengths, and weaknesses. This can help them to discover their job preferences and where their passions lie. Some interview participants mentioned that graduates should know what career they strive for, as this would enhance their commitment and effectiveness at work. Furthermore, graduates should not only determine their professional preferences, but they should also be aware of their personal preferences – where and how do they want to live? The employees pointed out that knowing and setting priorities in advance would help to pursue their aims more effectively.

"Be very clear why you want it – with yourself, secretly in your bedroom. And once you think you know exactly why you want to do it, then see if UNEP is the best place for this. And it is your answer to you. Then, if you think UNEP is the best place, then you will have told yourself why you think this and then go for it. But be clear with yourself."

"You have to have passion to work in an environment like this one. [...] You cannot leave your country and come here to do business as usual. It does not work back home either. So you really need passion. You must love what you want to do. So people that are determined, I am sure that they will get the work here because they have done the right steps before, not only in the academic background but also with hands-on work and some kind of voluntary skills could be forced as part of the curriculum, like you have to go and serve six months or one year away, or you have to do one year in a Latin American, Asian, or African country as part of the curriculum to promote that within, by the university."

Summarizing the recommendations given by the interview participants, the table below gives an overview on how to best prepare oneself for a career at UNEP:

Gaining work experience abroad (e.g., internships, volunteer work)	Very often mentioned
Building and using networks	Very often mentioned
Academic training	Often mentioned
Interview training, using key words in the application	Often mentioned
Confidence and self-awareness	Often mentioned

Table 6: Recommendations to graduates

4.7 What can universities do best to prepare students for a career at UNEP?

One of the main objectives of the PROFIO project is to design a model for the ideal educational offerings preparing students for careers in the international public service. In order to obtain information on how educational offerings could be improved and changed in terms of the composition of curricula, as well as teaching methods, extracurricular activities, and the combination of academic and practical training, the interview participants were asked what universities could best do to prepare people for a career at UNEP.

Most interview participants suggested that universities should put sufficient emphasis on **professional skills development**. They should offer professional training modules which are meant to improve students' communication skills, including writing and presentation skills, their leadership skills, teamwork skills, intercultural skills, and management skills.

"And for a young person who is at the university today, they need to be taking leadership courses. They need to take management courses even if they are certificate course. They need to take diversity courses in intercultural differences. The more they can understand and appreciate the different cultures, the more suitable they are going to be for a UN position."

"For the universities, they should introduce what we call 'side courses' which prepare people in communication, in public speaking, in leadership, [and] programs that link them to international networks."

"Focus on other things like teamwork and also really emphasizing good writing and communication skills... some supplementary courses. I think if we start molding people early, then we will get a better result at the end in those... If we are talking about cultural diversity, the earlier you sensitize people to be culturally sensitive and to know how to integrate and communicate in diverse environments, then you definitely get a better effect than starting much later when they are set in their ways."

Summarizing the statements which apply to the practical orientation of educational programs, most of the participants in this study indicated that academic programs often lack a sufficient level of opportunities for **practical-oriented and work-based learning** which could contribute to the students' "preparedness for practice and professional life". To compensate for the lack of hands-on experience, many survey participants suggested for one thing that universities should increase the number of opportunities for internships and field work experience abroad so that students can gain insight into professional life and develop professional skills. As our study has shown, professional experience abroad is one qualification hiring managers seek when assessing the suitability of their candidates.

"The universities should seek to prepare the people for the new challenges coming. And not just sitting in the classroom. Take up challenges in post-conflict areas. Where are post-conflict countries? Can we go there and practice our conflict-resolution skills? Yes, you need to be in the field where the action is much more than sitting and listening to the lecturer. If you are in Europe, challenge yourself by coming to the Sudan or Congo. [...] Those who would really enhance the understanding and the broad scope that university students should have when they leave because if it is too narrow then they are thinking of only one direction. There is not even opening opportunities for employment for themselves because they are just narrowly thinking about something."

"One thing that universities do not teach is how to work. So somehow, there has got to be a change, and there should be a hands-on work training, not only through internships, which I

think are very valuable, but through doing one semester or one term in a multicultural international organization or resolving and addressing problems that some multicultural environmental organizations are having. Maybe the students could deal with them on a case-basis from the beginning. If the students are clear that that is what they want, that is the career they are looking for, they should be able to show a grasp of the different problems that you are facing in international organizations.”

“Probably the most difficult step in coming to work in the UN, for example, is the first step – I mean to open one door. So in order to open a door, probably, recently graduated students should need to have the adequate background, what we were discussing at the beginning, plus some experience, hands-on experience, and some international experience.”

Another recommendation made by the interview participants is that universities should include **applied policy seminars, case workshops, or team-based and hands-on projects** to enhance the practical outlook of educational programs. By including such active learning methods, students would be enabled to apply their knowledge and skills acquired in prior academic training. Moreover, while working on “real-world” projects for clients from the private or public service, students would learn the different phases of a project and thus experience a project life cycle – from the moment the project is conceived to its completion. This practical and project-oriented learning experience is rated as very valuable by the interview participants, as students would acquire project management skills and other professional skills, such as client orientation, teamwork, and leadership skills, that one needs in order to be successful at UNEP. Overall, the survey participants stressed the importance of problem- or project-oriented courses in addition to modules which purely teach knowledge without any practical outlook or opportunity for application.

“You choose a subject, work in a group, work on that almost throughout the whole year, and then you make a big report. It gives you a lot of freedom, but it is also very difficult sometimes to handle that freedom and you have from your normal education in high school these ideas that you have to have a teacher in front of you who will tell you what to do, and you do not have that there. But in the end, even though I was quite frustrated, I do think that it gave me some skills for acquiring knowledge of new problems, working with other people, writing reports, doing presentations, and things like that.”

With regard to the importance of professional skills development and practical orientation in learning, it is important to mention that some of the interview participants pointed out that universities, as academic institutions, should not limit their curricular offerings to professional training courses. On the contrary: They should provide **a solid combination of both academic and practical training** to equip students with both thorough knowledge in a certain field of study and a wide range of useful skills.

“Actually, although many people say you should have more practice in university studies, I think it is very important to have the theory because then when you come into a different situation, then you can always also relate back to a theoretical background because the answers cannot always be found in practice. But when you know the theory, then you can implement the theory in practice. I think it is very important to have very broad knowledge”.

When discussing the importance of practical training in addition to academic training, some of the interview participants stated that universities should equip their students with **analytical and critical thinking skills**.

"Learn to think, doubt. I think doubt is very good – not taking things for granted, I would say. This is what universities or any education should teach people. Make up your mind yourself."

Another suggestion made by the interview participants is that educational programs should be significantly internationalized in substance and structure to ensure an **international orientation in learning**. Structurally, the addition of foreign students and faculty could provide international enrichment. This ensures that students from different cultural backgrounds study together and acquire intercultural competences necessary for successful performance on the job:

"But if I think only about the study part, of course it would be easier if our school would have had more international students, because [my country] is quite far north. We do get them but not that many."

Some of the interview participants recommended that universities should offer more **dual degree programs** to help a student to acquire a broader range of skills.

"I think you need to start making more rounded people like I said. Even if it means offering dual course programs – I have seen that offered a lot in America and Australia where they offer you a dual package program in one thing and another, and you qualify in two degree programs and a lot more... from the life skills. A life skill sort of component lacks too much in the substantive courses. You find sometimes that is not what you need in life – to just be an expert in something."

As for the actual content of academic programs, most of the survey participants strongly recommended that **UN-related subjects** should be covered. They said in particular that students should acquire basic knowledge of the development, structure, and functions of the UN agencies and programs; an understanding of the role the UN plays in the development of international law and policy; and the ability to think critically about the significance of the UN to contemporary world affairs. Furthermore, they suggested that educational programs should create detailed modules on the structure and function of various international organizations, including courses on the instruments of international law and international economic development.

"Things like: What are the real mandates of each of the UN organizations? Where does one stop and one start? It is not really that clear cut, but it is something that would be helpful to know. What is the difference between being part of the UN Secretariat and not being part of the UN Secretariat? For example, in UNEP we are not part of the UN Secretariat. Why not? What does that mean? Why do I care as a staff member? What difference does it make to me? What is the difference between an organization and a program? The UNEP and UNDP are programs. You have the World Trade Organization as an organization. What is the difference? Why should I care? There is a lot of talk now about the UN Environment Organization and transforming UNEP into that. Why? What does it mean?"

"A basic course in how international organizations operate. It is pretty useful even if you have

not been in one to understand the way that they have governing bodies and those give mandates to the programs and you are there to deliver a program, work with governments, and all these kinds of things. And how the whole thing is structured, it is a valuable experience. It is something that I have never had that I just learned by being in it. But it would give people a head start to understand that."

In the opinion of most interview participants, universities should place sufficient emphasis on **career development activities**. With the help of career services, universities should provide students with early support and involvement in the career-finding process by assisting them in developing a professional network, improving interviewing and résumé-writing skills, and offering career information sessions.

"Interview techniques are another thing. There are definitely skills involved in doing a good interview. It comes with practice, but I think that is something that in preparing people to move from university to try and get jobs, it is quite a useful thing to do. That is again something they did not used to but maybe they do now."

"I think career counseling is very important in this regard. Career counseling in universities is very important."

Summarizing the data collected on how educational offerings could be improved and changed, the analysis of the participants' responses revealed that universities could do more to prepare students for careers in the international public service in general and at UNEP in particular. With regard to the composition of educational programs, universities should pay more attention to teaching the skills and competences (communication, social, intercultural, language, management, and leadership skills) essential for working in this field. In this case, the use of active and problem-based teaching methods was said to be the best means of equipping students with the skills and competences needed. Furthermore, to ensure the practical and professional outlook of educational programs, the incorporation, internships, and other programs through which students acquire work experience should be included in the curriculum. However, there should be a healthy balance between practical training, which aims for the development and improvement of certain skills and competences, and academic training, which concentrates on the transfer of knowledge.

5 Conclusion

This study aimed to gain insight into the recruitment process at UNEP and collect detailed information on the educational and professional backgrounds of employees of UNEP. Another main objective was to obtain useful recommendations for educational institutions on how to best prepare students for careers at agencies and programs of the United Nations in general. Qualitative research methods were used to achieve the stated objectives. In the following, the central findings of this study are summarized.

Concerning success factors for being hired and promoted at UNEP, the results of this study have shown that the “perfect candidate” UNEP would look for is someone who has a master’s degree and expertise in an area which is relevant to the job in question, sufficient work experience abroad, and competencies necessary for a successful performance. These requirements were mentioned by most of the UNEP employees interviewed. The candidates’ competencies are assessed during the selection interview, where one should be able to demonstrate that he or she possesses the skills, attitudes, and behaviors listed in the vacancy announcement.

The analysis of qualitative data has shown that the subjects studied by most UNEP employees were in a finance- and management-related area, in a technical area, or environmental and natural sciences, and humanities. Here, the combination of a technical sector or environmental/natural science degree program with a management- or finance-oriented degree program was often identified. This combination can be seen as a good means to prepare oneself for a career at UNEP, as it provides one with the qualifications and competencies needed for positions in the professional category. The majority of our interview partners were quite content with what they learned at university and how it prepared them for their current field of work. In particular, analytical and critical thinking skills, as well as substantive knowledge specific to the current field of work was provided by their university education. However, the practical training which is important for developing professional skills and gaining insight into professional life was said to be lacking.

All interview participants gathered work experience prior to their employment at UNEP. Most of them worked abroad in the international public sector and said that their experience was useful for their current field of work.

With regard to the skills and qualifications necessary for working at UNEP, this study has identified that the following skills are required to be able to perform the various tasks in professional positions: analytical skills, basic management skills, project management skills, communication skills, teamwork skills, language skills, intercultural skills, and IT/computer skills. In particular, teamwork and intercultural skills were mentioned very often. Besides these skills, there are certain attitudes and behaviors which are considered to be essential for all staff members: One who pursues a career at UNEP should be committed and hardworking and accept the organizational values such as “integrity”, “respect for diversity”, and “professionalism”.

Concerning specific recommendations on how universities could do better in preparing students for careers at international organizations, it was highlighted that universities should not only provide academic training. Courses on professional skills development and intern-

ships and other programs in which students can learn how to transform theory into practice should be offered by universities.

In addition to internships, applied policy seminars, case workshops, or team-based projects could help to compensate for the lack of hands-on experience. Here, the importance of practical and project-oriented learning is stressed. Furthermore, universities should place sufficient emphasis on career development activities. Career services could provide students with early support and involvement in the career-finding process.

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Appendix 1 – United Nations Core Values and Competencies

Core Values

Integrity

- Demonstrates the values of the United Nations in daily activities and behaviors
- Acts without consideration of personal gain
- Resists undue political pressure in decision-making
- Does not abuse power or authority
- Stands by decisions that are in the Organization's interest, even if they are unpopular
- Takes prompt action in cases of unprofessional or unethical behaviour

Professionalism

- Shows pride in work and in achievements
- Demonstrates professional competence and mastery of subject matter
- Is conscientious and efficient in meeting commitments, observing deadlines and achieving results
- Is motivated by professional rather than personal concerns
- Shows persistence when faced with difficult problems or challenges
- Remains calm in stressful situations

Respect for Diversity

- Works effectively with people from all backgrounds
- Treats all people with dignity and respect
- Treats men and women equally
- Shows respect for and understanding of diverse points of view and demonstrates this understanding in daily work and decision-making
- Examines own biases and behaviours to avoid stereotypical responses
- Does not discriminate against any individual or group

Core Competencies

Communication

- Speaks and writes clearly and effectively
- Listens to others, correctly interprets messages from others and responds appropriately
- Asks questions to clarify, and exhibits interest in having two-way communication
- Tailors language, tone, style and format to match the audience
- Demonstrates openness in sharing information and keeping people informed

Teamwork

- Works collaboratively with colleagues to achieve organizational goals
- Solicits input by genuinely valuing others' ideas and expertise; is willing to learn from others
- Places team agenda before personal agenda
- Supports and acts in accordance with final group decision, even when such decisions may not entirely reflect own position
- Shares credit for team accomplishments and accepts joint responsibility for team shortcomings

Planning and Organizing

- Develops clear goals that are consistent with agreed strategies
- Identifies priority activities and assignments; adjusts priorities as required
- Allocates appropriate amount of time and resources for completing work
- Foresees risks and allows for contingencies when planning
- Monitors and adjusts plans and actions as necessary
- Uses time efficiently

Accountability

- Takes ownership of all responsibilities and honours commitments
- Delivers outputs for which one has responsibility within prescribed time, cost and quality standards
- Operates in compliance with organizational regulations and rules
- Supports subordinates, provides oversight and takes responsibility for delegated assignments
- Takes personal responsibility for his/her own shortcomings and those of the work unit, where applicable

Client orientation

- Considers all those to whom services are provided to be “clients ” and seeks to see things from clients’ point of view
- Establishes and maintains productive partnerships with clients by gaining their trust and respect
- Identifies clients’ needs and matches them to appropriate solutions
- Monitors ongoing developments inside and outside the clients’ environment to keep informed and anticipate problems
- Keeps clients informed of progress or setbacks in projects
- Meets timeline for delivery of products or services to client

Creativity

- Actively seeks to improve programmes or services
- Offers new and different options to solve problems or meet client needs
- Promotes and persuades others to consider new ideas
- Takes calculated risks on new and unusual ideas; thinks “outside the box”
- Takes an interest in new ideas and new ways of doing things
- Is not bound by current thinking or traditional approaches

Commitment to continuous learning

- Keeps abreast of new developments in own occupation/profession
- Actively seeks to develop oneself professionally and personally
- Contributes to the learning of colleagues and subordinates
- Shows willingness to learn from others
- Seeks feedback to learn and improve

Technological awareness

- Keeps abreast of available technology
- Understands applicability and limitations of technology to the work of the office
- Actively seeks to apply technology to appropriate tasks
- Shows willingness to learn new technology

Managerial competencies

Vision

- Identifies strategic issues, opportunities and risks
- Clearly communicates links between the Organization’s strategy and the work unit’s goals.
- Generates and communicates broad and compelling organizational direction, inspiring others to pursue that same direction
- Conveys enthusiasm about future possibilities

Leadership

- Serves as a role model that other people want to follow
- Empowers others to translate vision into results
- Is proactive in developing strategies to accomplish objectives
- Establishes and maintains relationships with a broad range of people to understand needs and gain support
- Anticipates and resolves conflicts by pursuing mutually agreeable solutions

- Drives for change and improvement; does not accept the status quo
- Shows the courage to take unpopular stands

Empowering Others

- Delegates responsibility, clarifies expectations, and gives staff autonomy in important areas of their work
- Encourages others to set challenging goals
- Holds others accountable for achieving results related to their area of responsibility
- Genuinely values all staff members' input and expertise
- Shows appreciation and rewards achievement and effort
- Involves others when making decisions that affect them

Managing Performance

- Delegates the appropriate responsibility, accountability and decision-making authority
- Makes sure that roles, responsibilities and reporting lines are clear to each staff member
- Accurately judges the amount of time and resources needed to accomplish a task and matches task to skills
- Monitors progress against milestones and deadlines
- Regularly discusses performance and provides feedback and coaching to staff
- Encourages risk-taking and supports creativity and initiative
- Actively supports the development and career aspirations of staff
- Appraises performance fairly

Building Trust

- Provides an environment in which others can talk and act without fear of repercussion
- Manages in a deliberate and predictable way
- Operates with transparency; has no hidden agenda
- Places confidence in colleagues, staff members and clients
- Gives proper credit to others
- Follows through on agreed upon actions
- Treats sensitive or confidential information appropriately

Judgment/Decision-making

- Identifies the key issues in a complex situation, and comes to the heart of the problem quickly
- Gathers relevant information before making a decision
- Considers positive and negative impacts of decisions prior to making them
- Takes decisions with an eye to the impact on others and on the Organization
- Proposes a course of action or makes a recommendation based on all available information
- Checks assumptions against facts
- Determines that the actions proposed will satisfy the expressed and underlying needs for the decision
- Makes tough decisions when necessary

Appendix 2 – Sample topic guide

Interview UNEP – Topic Guide (Employees)

Key interests:

- CV of interviewee (university education, internships, professional experience etc.)
- Evaluation of university education (preparation for recent job?)
- Evaluation of steps in career (preparation for recent job?)
- Experiences with recruitment process
- Career within the organization
- 'Perfect candidate'?
- Recommendations for future applicants

Introduction

- Introduce ourselves and the PROFIO project
- Explain interest of interview and what it will be about
- Guarantee anonymity
- Ask for permission to tape record interview

→ Switch on tape recorder and have paper and pencil ready to take notes

Background of interviewee

- Where does the interviewee come from (nationality)?
- What is the position and function of the interviewee within the organization?
- What are the tasks is he/she responsible for?
- Motivation for a career at UNEP?

Educational and professional background of interviewee

- 'CV' of interviewee
- Degree(s)/Subject(s): What did you study? What degree do you have?
- University/Universities: At which universities did you study?
- Study abroad: Did you study abroad? Where?
- Evaluation of university education: What was good and what was lacking? Did it prepare you for your recent job? Do you identify educational elements as being especially relevant for careers in international organizations?
- Internships: Did you do any internships?

- Evaluation of internships: Do you identify your internships as being especially relevant for your career?
- Training: Have you had any special training? (e.g., soft skills)
- Work experience: Did you have different posts before recent one?
- Evaluation of work experience
- Languages spoken: What languages do you speak?

Work at UNEP

- Application process for current job (how you applied, the process, your experiences)
→ What do you believe were the reasons you were hired?
- Career within the organization: Promotion? Different posts before recent one?
- Evaluation of career chances within the organization

German colleagues

- Do you think they are qualified and well prepared for working in an international organization in comparison to colleagues from other countries?

Perfect Candidate

- Considering your own experiences: What would the 'perfect candidate' be like?
→ in terms of education, experiences, skills, character traits, etc.

Recommendations for future applicants

- What would you recommend to future applicants? How could someone best prepare themselves for a career in an international organization?

Recommendations for universities

- Is there anything you would recommend that universities should integrate into their courses that would help prepare people for a career in an international organization?